Midlife Crisis

OAF

NoMeansNo

Hits & Misses

Vol. 1

OAF

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Hits & Misses

Era HC

OAF (RIP) from Vancouver, BC were interviewed on July 9th, 2016 after playing a house show (Private Idaho, RIP) in London, Ontario. I had a recorder borrowed from work that weekend and didn't even consider doing an interview until a couple of hours before the show. I was clearly somewhat rusty in my interview techniques, so thanks to everyone in the band for being gracious enough to bear with me. Unfortunately, OAF disbanded shortly after returning home and I've no word yet about what might become of their final recordings.

MLC: ***I've met some of you guys before, but just so I can match names to voices on the tape, I'd like you to introduce yourselves, say what you do in the band—and also because I'm curious—your ages, as this is a tender subject for me.***
Tony (T): I'm Tony AKA Tony 2 phones and I'm 23 and I sing in OAF.
Jakob (J): I'm Jakob, I'm 24. I play guitar in OAF.
Damon (D): Damon, 21, I play guitar also.
T: AKA Chi-ku.
D: Yeah, AKA Chi-ku.

MLC: ***Now I'm going to have to get some help with the spelling on that.***
D: Yo, sometimes you're on the freeway and it's five in the morning and you hear a beer crack in back of the van and it goes 'chi-ku'…

MLC: ***And that's you making that sound…***
D: And that's me.
T: We normally have two other people. Sarah is our bassist normally…

MLC: ***And she flew back today? Was this pre-planned or…?***
T: It's pre-planned, yeah.
D: It's because she's a coward. (Much laughter) Just kidding!
T: No, she had to get home and pay rent; she couldn't take that much time off work.

MLC: ***And you have Brendan filling in on drums because you have another drummer who couldn't make the tour.***
J: Yeah, same situation.
D: Coward!

MLC: ***And this is your second or third tour?***
All: Second tour, yeah.

MLC: ***And this is about three weeks all told?***
J: Almost, maybe like a couple days shy of four weeks.

MLC: ***So here's a rather global punk rock type question so bear with me. I'm just wondering how traveling with a band doing a DIY tour in 2016 makes your think about the relative strengths of punk and HC as a DIY vehicle in 2016 as well as any points of frustration. I'm thinking here either on a larger punk rock as a whole kind of way or even if you think about back home in Vancouver, and some of the strengths and frustrating aspects of what you're doing in punk rock in 2016.***
J: I don't think we've met any assholes on the tour; I've been really impressed by people. There's been a couple of dud shows, but not for the lack of effort on the part of promoters. But I mean we broke down in Vermont and maybe with like five hours' notice someone from Montreal came down and picked us up and drove us across the border. Then we've been able to bum rides for the last three shows. Shit like that, where people come through

*(Front cover photo credits: OAF by **Angela Owens**—http://www.angelaxowens.com; NoMeansNo by **Iztok Vidmar**—http://iztokx.blogspot.ca/*
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at the last minute. Like even on our last tour, it was four in the morning after we drove through the Rockies from Oregon into California. And putting out a call at three A.M. we were able to find someone who was down to stay up until five to let us into his house to sleep. Just shit like that—people coming through with no notice…
T: Do you mean struggles like with punk in general or doing a DIY tour?

MLC: ***A bit of both, but also I guess punk as perhaps some sort of idealized notion of punk and then the reality that you often meet when you're confronted with various individuals.***
T: I think that when I tell people at work that I'm going to be touring, they think that like I'm going to be staying in hotels and drinking Hennessy and stuff, but in reality I'm like eating Taco Bell and drinking water-beer. In relation to doing a DIY tour, I think that people don't put as much effort or feel they need to put as much energy into doing our shows which sometimes results in sometimes we don't get paid or get paid very little when we've been driving for eight hours in a row. That sucks but we all know that's like a part of it. In contrast to you know, bands like S.H.I.T. who just make like ten thousand dollars every show (others start laughing) and just sleep in hotels and live in condos and stuff.

MLC: ***Owww. (laughter continues)***
J: Me and Tony aren't very confident that our house is going to be standing after we get back to Vancouver.

MLC: ***Well yes, because of all the shit talk that's happened since you've left.***
T: Greg (S.H.I.T.) is going to put out the call to the punk illuminati.

MLC: ***Now some of you guys are originally from the Sarnia area and some of you guys are originally from the Vancouver area. I want to ask you about some of your initial exposure to punk and the form it took in terms of some of the 'gateway' bands that you were exposed to. And as a second part to the question, how do you think your early-days-punk-rock-selves would have reacted if OAF was the band you heard or saw?***
T: Gateway bands in Ontario or altogether?

MLC: ***Just in your exposure to punk rock in general. Like I saw people nodding their heads to the Blink-182 cover (that another band had played earlier that night).***
T: Someone else take this first.
D: I'll take this off the top. Like if I heard OAF when I was like fucking twelve-years-old, I would have thought it was complete shit. I would have not understood it at all. I would have thought it was just like random noise and I would have not listened to it at all. Like growing up my parents listened to Christian music. My first punk band was like listening to fucking Sex Pistols or some shit and this was like after my first favourite song was by The Fray. (Everyone laughs) That was my shit when I was younger. I didn't get into punk until I was like fifteen years old and then it was like Sex Pistols and like The Clash.

MLC: ***And even when you hear that stuff now and that's your frame of reference, those sound like rock records.***
T: Isn't that ironic? Because tell him who your dad is.
D: Yeah, we have to clear the air here.

MLC***: Well, this is coming up later. I will ask.***
T: That's a hot sound bite.
J: My come-up bands were shit like FUGAZI and that… did someone just scoff? (All laughter) My entry-point for punk was framed by politics I think. Like I got really into listening to certain bands by reading this book by an ex-Liberal MP named Warren Kinsella *Fury's Hour*.

MLC: ***Oh yeah, and he was in The Hot Nasties. (MLC Note: Kinsella also authored the 1994 book Web of Hate: Inside Canada's Far Right Network and currently plays bass in S.F.H.—Shit From Hell.)***
J: Yeah, I read that book in like eighth or ninth grade and then kind of grew out of listening to sort of radio punk for lack of a better word—which I still fuck with like Green Day and My Chemical Romance—and shifted more towards stuff like Black Flag, the Buzzcocks, Wire. That book and then this magazine called *Alternative Press* that sort of fed my interest in emo bands and shit put out an issue where they listed the top ten most influential punk and hardcore bands and it was a sick as fuck list in retrospect. Like there was bands I didn't get into at the time and others on the list that I did, but there was like Moss Icon, Integrity, Fugazi…

MLC: ***Who you don't often see lumped together in the same sort of list.***
J: No, not at all. It was like really crazy even in retrospect it was a really on-point list. That issue and that book really sort of pushed me in that direction. And I think a younger self would have seen OAF and just been bummed out by people moshing, but that's one thing I'll say about Fugazi: I wish now that I could spin kick but my hips are dicked and I was sort of like very anti-mosh when I was in my physical prime.

MLC: ***Well that was basically a testament to the era.***
J: Oh yeah, of course. Like I still admire them for their ethos, I just don't necessarily agree anymore.
T: We've just turned into assholes.
J: I'm pretty ignorant. I think I would bum myself out.

MLC: ***It's a very different frame of reference if I think Fugazi and bands like OAF.***
J: Oh yeah, I think I would have liked OAF musically, but I think the atmosphere would have put me off.

(Well, the title for this zine started as a joke… One year later, the crisis is most definitely real!)

I would have been scared.
T: I would have been into it. I would have been into it because I've been into sick shit since I was like forever… (All laugh)

MLC: ***Since the womb…***
T: Since the womb I've been listening to fucking good shit; I know everything. (Someone from the background shouts, 'Fruit of the Loom.')

MLC: ***I tried to book Fugazi on their first Canadian tour and what happened was when I called them up they said, "Well, all the dates are booked." But they ended up cancelling the Montreal show because they got to the venue and the venue said, "Well, yeah, we're not doing all ages." So they ended up not doing that gig on that tour so they could have fit in an extra show. I'd booked bands from DC at that point but yeah, that's just the way it went.***
T: Who was this band? Who was Fugazi? I don't know them. (laughter)

MLC: ***They're an old skinhead band…***
Brendan: Do they have tumblr?
D: Ian's my homie.

MLC: ***But let's get back to how primitive in some respects OAF would have been and how it just would have come across as overly noisy and a far cry from perhaps the Christian rock in the house at the time. It seems that listening to some of the first demo and more recent recording, it seems like it's getting even nastier and more primitive.***
T: I think that we're like musically…
J: Regressing…
T: Yeah, well that too. But I think that our approach to like metal music is like similar to Merauder. Like I think we understand Celtic Frost just as much as Merauder did to be honest, musically. Or like New York Hardcore bands in general because they all wanted to sound like Mayhem and those bands and I think we do a similar job.

MLC: ***Well, you didn't do the Darkthrone intro tonight.***
D: Tell him why we don't…
T: No, we scrapped that. I always liked that intro and then like someone came up to me and was like, "Oh, that's the intro in like that documentary *Until the Light Takes Us*!" And then I was like, "We're not doing this anymore." Fact.
D: It's the same thing like when we covered a Danzig song. So many people came up to us and were like, "Yo! That new song you guys played was sick!" and we're like, "That was a Danzig cover. Sorry."

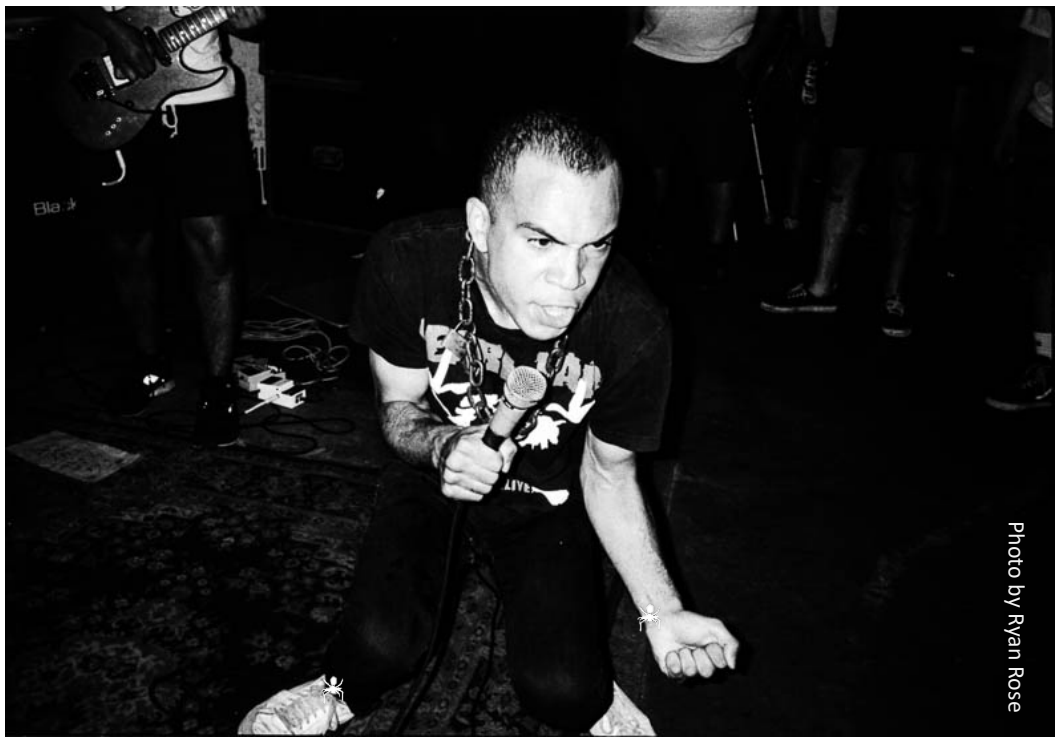
MLC: ***And that's when they say, "But that was your best song!"***
J: Yeah, straight up.

MLC: ***Sorry man. Now some of you guys (Tony, Brendan) were together in Misfortune and who was in Blockhead?***
J: That was me.

MLC***: In a lot of respects you guys have done far more with OAF as a band than some of those other acts were able to do in terms of shows and releases and the whole bit. So I was wondering how your experiences in some of those previous bands helped shape the vision of what you're doing with OAF right now? Also, what do you think you learned from playing with in those past bands that has enabled you to do what you're able to do here with OAF?***
J: I'm gonna plead the Fifth on Blockhead.
T: Yeah, Blockhead suck. Shout out to Tyler though.
D: Oh yeah, Tyler gives 'er, every time.
T: Yeah, they're the homies. That band ruled, but they were short-lived. Some members got caught in the mosh and they broke up because of it.
J: I feel like there's a lack of strategy in the logistics in OAF, which is to our detriment in some ways, but in other ways it's OK. I don't think we think too much in how we operate logistically as a band, but musically it's pretty locked in so it's sort of like one thing compensates for the other.

MLC: ***Because you guys have been going for over two years at this point.***
T: Yeah, about that.
J: Yeah, it's been a hectic two years though so I think that contributes to it. Like I think this current incarnation is the longest
T: I don't think it's been hectic. We've gone through member changes. We ain't S.H.I.T. (people laugh) No, S.H.I.T. is hectic dog. They toured like Mexico. No, I'm just playing. But no, we haven't toured too much; we've only done two tours. I think there's bands that like tour a year after they come out off a demo and that seems infinitely more hectic than all the breathing room that we've had.
J: I don't know if I'd call it breathing room though. Like part of the reason that the sound has changed so much from demo to demo is because we've lost members that had a way of songwriting… Like I think right now we're closest to the vision that I think that we had in the beginning because we've like, tonally I'm very influenced by—like one of my favourite sub-genres of punk is like crasher Japanese D-Beat. We wanted to start a mid-paced hardcore band with really raw tones. Just really evil sounding music. And the first demo, it's like Boston HC came up a lot and I think that's what appealed to the original line-up of members. And then we wrote the first demo. We then lost two members from that, then gained one member for the second demo?
T: Yeah, no, there were a lot of member changes 'til the line-up that we have now and I think that it was always

(Don't let the jaded grandpas tell you different, current DIY punk in N. America is the best it's been at any point over the last two-plus decades.)

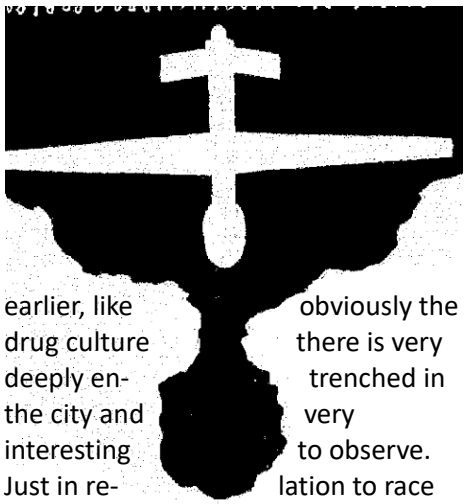


supposed to be a primitive project and we've gotten closer to doing that. I think we had a lot of members who were more technically inclined and wanted to like finesse things and like let that shine, which isn't really what I was ever interested in in the first place.
J: Yeah, exactly.

MLC: ***I mean even watching you perform and seeing you with Misfortune on a number of occasions—and I loved Misfortune—but you seem to be like, well, I'm very conscious about teeth these days and I'd be far more likely to grind my teeth to this band, and there's a level of aggression and negativity that seems really at the fore.***
J: Yeah.

MLC: ***So to hear the records and look at the lyrics, you know, it's fucking bleak. So I'm wondering about how the band provides a relief from ordinary day-to-day bullshit and how it creates a whole other layer of bullshit to deal with. And balancing that against, whether work, relationships, and family and that sort of stuff and what the band brings you in that regard. Does it create new frustrations for you as well dwelling on this fucking rawness?***
J: I think for me it provides sort of an outlet for interests and dark thoughts that I have that's a little bit more positive than me brooding on them. I'm very interested in shit like, I don't want to say conspiracies, but just sort of ideas about like governments and powers that be having a hand in oppressing minorities through nefarious means outside of policy… it's reflected a lot more so in the artwork. I think the artwork and the lyrics sort of go hand in hand in really interesting ways. And I think that being able to articulate interests that I have with Tony through music, art, and the lyrics all together is really—I don't want to say therapeutic because it's not something that crushes me on the inside—but it's very rewarding artistically for me to create something sonically that's sonically evil and oppressive that reflects interest I have in evil things.

MLC: ***I wanted to ask about the artwork, but I'll do that in just a moment. Looking at some of the lyrics with some of the lines like "Cheat to survive," right? And when I think about Vancouver, what we always see on the news out here at any rate is about the cost of living, how absurd it is and how it's less affordable than it's ever been. So I'm wondering if you guys could comment on what you've been seeing in Vancouver in terms of how it's affected your lives getting by and how it's even affected Vancouver as a place that can host DIY events and things. I know people that have moved out of the city because they're like, "We can't afford it; we can't live here anymore."***
J: Yeah. I think, I mean I could be off-base, but I think Vancouver's really comparable to cities like Toronto and New York in that aspect of it and the cost of living. But there's something about the people that, maybe it's just in the punk scene, but I feel like people aren't necessarily as driven to pursue artistic endeavors as people in those cities are. Which isn't to deride people in Vancouver because everyone's fucking struggling. It's hard to find well-paying jobs.
T: Like look at Chi-ku.
J: Yeah, like look at Chi-ku, (look at) me. I feel like there's thriving scenes in New York and Toronto where people have just as hard a time getting by as there are in Vancouver, but there's just something about that city where people seem to be more content to just work and scrape by without putting out the effort that you sort of see in other cities.
T: Yeah, I agree. In terms of our lyrical content it's definitely a reflection of living in Vancouver. Uh, that's all I know to say in relation to that.
J: I think living in Vancouver drives my interest in shit that I talked about



earlier, like obviously the drug culture there is very deeply en- trenched in the city and very interesting to observe. Just in re- lation to race relations and the gender dynamics that you see down there. It's trippy.

T: In relation to drug culture, like having moved from the East coast, it's way more ingrained in people's lives in Vancouver even if you don't affiliate with things in relation to that. It's still a part of your everyday lives somehow or another. I feel like it's more prevalent.

MLC: ***It's something that I picked up on even with some of the lyrics there's this whole thing where you're describing lifestyles where people are compelled to rely on various elements of the underground economy or various underground economies, and at the same time they're also being condemned for participating when really maybe for a lot of people there aren't a lot of other options.***

J: I mean it's not even a matter of there not being other options. I think it's just like people's relationship to drugs and underground economies are just a lot more complex than people generally give them credit for. Some people could say that I, by working for a non-profit that supports people with addictions and mental health issues, benefit from the war on drugs and the laissez faire attitude that a lot of harm reduction facilities have towards that is indirectly…

T: Counterproductive…

J: Yeah, counterproductive or like indirectly some might say that my paychecks come from other people's suffering, which I definitely understand, you know what I mean? It's a very fucked up dynamic when I think about it. Like I love my job; I'm glad that I got it, and I think that given the policies of the government and the decades of fallout from the drug war, harm reduction is the best policy to begin to heal communities hit as hard as the ones I work in. But when you get down to the moralistic nitty gritty of those dynamics it's a really weird and interesting thing to navigate and I think that comes through in OAF in a lot of the lyrics and artwork.

T: The lyrical content is also for the most part specifically in relation to myself, you know what I mean? Like there are aspects where I collaborate with Jacob in terms of contextual stuff that we do, we collaborate on a lot of that. But I don't want people to think that like OAF is a band of super turnt people all hustling and using the underground economy to facilitate their lifestyles or anything in relation to that. Like, that's mostly just me.

MLC: ***The thing is, like I wasn't trying to read into the lyrics and think this is like a first-person narrative. I thought about more, and particularly in relation to the artwork, as describing situations.***

T: Yeah. It's definitely a narrative though, for sure. Like it's… ah… (pauses)

MLC: ***Are you blushing? (People laugh)***

T: No, it's weird to talk about on a recording. It's hard to be specific.

MLC: ***(To Jacob) Now you're an outreach worker dealing in harm reduction or?***

J: Yeah, my title is like… I don't even know if I should say my title, but I'm in outreach and harm reduction work. Just stuff like helping people with addictions, mental health issues, forensic histories get to resources like wellfare, disability, detox or safe gear. Anything they need.

MLC: ***Well, it ties in because you mentioned the artwork. Now did you do the artwork on the insert of the first 7"?***

J: No, now this is a good opportunity to say this. Our friend in Calgary, **Adam Willett**, did the insert in the 7".

T: He never got credited for it.

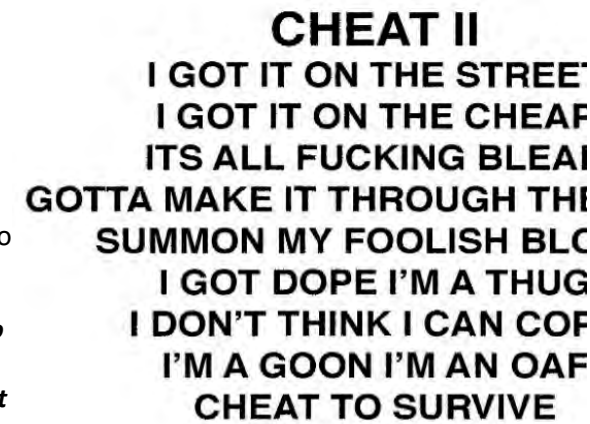
J: I fucked up and didn't credit him in the first draft of the insert and by the time I fixed it everything had been printed. But I'd just like to say, Adam Willet, Garbage of the World, Golden Path, what else does he do?

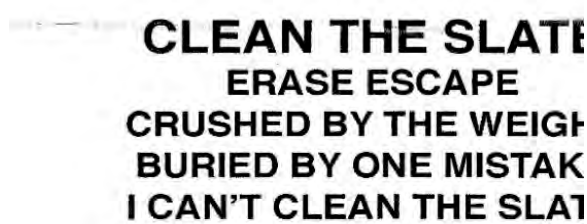
T: Focus Formula…

J: Focus Formula…

T: …and Poison Wave, he does a lot of shit.

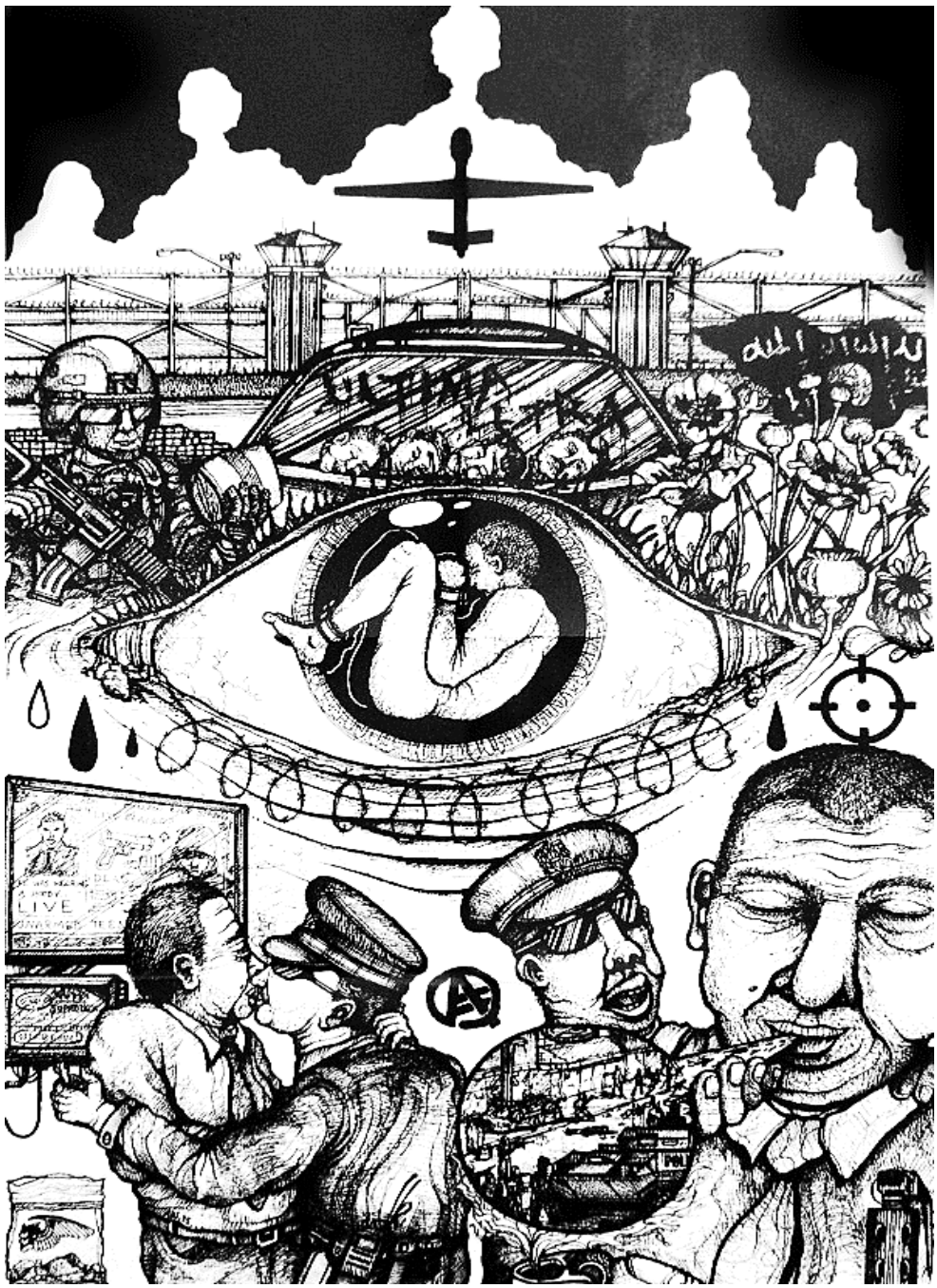
J: Yeah, he's fucking killer. I sent him like a laundry list of things I was influenced by and a description of a scene and what he did with it was insane.


CHEAT II
I GOT IT ON THE STREE
I GOT IT ON THE CHEAF
ITS ALL FUCKING BLEAI
GOTTA MAKE IT THROUGH THI
SUMMON MY FOOLISH BLC
I GOT DOPE I'M A THUG
I DON'T THINK I CAN COF
I'M A GOON I'M AN OAF
CHEAT TO SURVIVE



MLC: ***It was very interesting because getting the record and the cover is very sort of sparse-looking and it's not very ornate. But then you open the insert and it really complements the lyrics and I thought it really points to a lot of the hypocrisy looking at law enforcement, the military, some of the larger drug trade mechanisms and systems and also hinting at the people who profit from this and the people that suffer as a result. So talking about Vancouver, you know Vancouver on a very local level is home to some of the first safe injection sites in the country. Canada right now is looking at potentially decriminalizing or legalizing softer drugs. Do you have faith in the potential of these sorts of***

(Update as of summer/fall 2017: Closer to home, activists tired of government inaction have set up unauthorized overdose prevention sites in an attempt to stem the tide of overdose deaths in Toronto. There has even been talk of setting up safe injection sites where I live in London, Ontario.) (P.S. Zoë Dodd #1!)



Artwork by Adam Willet

harm reduction efforts or these legalization efforts?

J: Oh yeah, if I didn't have faith in harm reduction if for no other reason than just as a means to keep people from dying, then I wouldn't work at the job I work at. I believe in harm reduction, I just think that a lot of people have… I don't think a lot of people give the amount of thought… it's difficult to get into because I don't know how much it would reflect on myself at my job if I got into it, but I feel like a lot of people are content to sort of leave harm reduction as the only mechanism to help individuals that are entrenched in the lifestyle.

T: Absolution, absolution.

J: Yeah, exactly.

T: It's definitely not a solution; it's like a band aid solution.

MLC: ***I guess my fear is that when you consider the communities and the individuals that bear the brunt of law enforcement, they'll probably still feel it regardless. And the people that are going to be let off by the police and the courts are the people that have been let off all along: college kids, good family backgrounds. So I think if anything, I can't see some of the pressure and some of the stresses the certain groups face, I can't see that going away.***

J: Yeah, I know, definitely. And that's something that I've been thinking about lately is just trying to be responsible in the way that I use the content. Like obviously Tony is, like a lot of members of the band are people of colour. It's like the relationship to my own privilege in talking about the subjects that interest me for the band. It's something that I've been thinking about a lot lately. Sorry, what was the question? I don't think that (response) was necessarily related to that.

MLC: ***Well, if you thought that legalization and some of the harm reduction strategies are actually going to help the people that need it most.***

J: Oh yeah, I feel as though the people that need the resources the most are getting them. I feel like the people that don't use them, like college kids that do hard drugs recreationally, have the sort of support system where they don't think that they need harm reduction, you know what I mean? Like most of the people that I work with have been street entrenched for their entire life or are like super young and just starting to get into the lifestyle and don't have any sort of support network, like (they have) no family, they've been in the foster care system all their life, like ex-residential school, in and out of prison... So I feel like the people who need the resources are getting them, it's just a matter of like—as Tony was saying—whether it's a band aid solution or a viable path or option to lead them towards a more healthy lifestyle. But I mean there's also the matter of giving people the dignity to choose how they live their life and helping them to live as safely as possible. It's a lot.

MLC: ***In reference to residential schools and things like that, I was working for a bit in Australia and I was working for a school for Aboriginal youth and one of the wildest things I heard… I had some colleagues there who had been taken from their families at a young age (commonly referred to as the Stolen Generations) and the perception there***

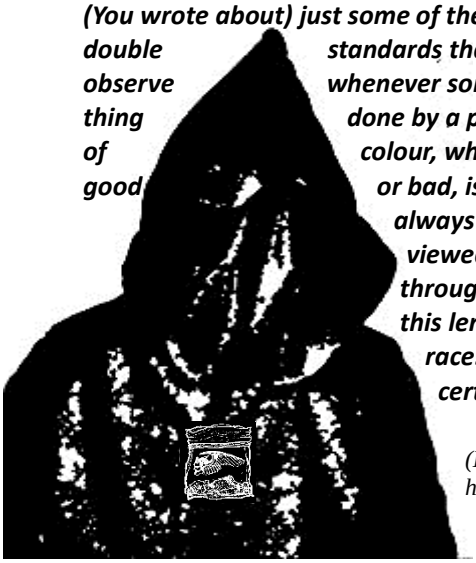
was, people would say to me, "Wow, you're from Canada, eh. First Nations people there have it so good there." OK, all things being relative, maybe for some it's not as bad on the whole, but when I think about the lifestyles and the quality of life for people in a country like Canada in this day and age it's fucking ridiculous.

J: Yeah, it's crazy to even consider things like that. My mother's First Nations and we're blessed to have not been touched by the legacy of Residential Schools nearly as much as many other families, but my great-grandfather fled Residential School when he was young and my family has felt the repercussions of that two generations separated. I can't imagine the sort of strife that people who've had their great-great grandparents, and their grandparents, and their own mothers and fathers all have consistently gone through those schools and I can't imagine the struggles that families like that would have had to endure. (Jakob edit: *The Mind of a Child* by Lorna Williams is a great documentary on the cognitive impact left by residential schools on aboriginal youth)

MLC: ***And to think that system lasted until the eighties…***

J: Nineties, like the last Residential School closed in '96.

MLC: ***It's ridiculous. You've brought up issues of race at various points and feel free to just ignore this question or not, but Tony you posted something recently online and I wanted to ask if you wouldn't mind speaking to it a bit more. (You wrote about) just some of the double standards that you observe whenever something done by a person of colour, whether good or bad, is always viewed through this lens of race. At a certain point we were talking about '90s punk and in the'90s the extent to which race came up, and I was roadieing for a band and I saw about five dates of the first Los Crudos tour, and (race) came up a bit there but within the punk scene the response was very much—you know people who were very well-intentioned, people of a similar background to myself, white, middle class, upper middle class or whatever—was like, "I'm colourblind!" and very much negating people's experiences and basically sort of wanting to wish these things (harder discussions about race) away. In some of the lyrics like I saw like in the "Jewel of Africa," for example, you seem to be talking about how draining and fatiguing it is to be viewed through that lens and I was wondering how this relates to experience in punk and hardcore. Do you feel you see a lot of the wider society bullshit still perpetuated within this smaller subculture or…***



T: Definitely. That post was in relation to the punk scene because…

MLC: ***And that's what I was afraid of. Sorry.***

T: Yeah, no, because like (racism in) the culture at large? That's expected, like it's not surprising to me and it doesn't really bum me out. The times it bums me out is when it's supposed to be like a scene of progressive people who like speak on all these issues, especially with all these cop killings in Dallas (Note: a few days prior to this interview in July 2016, fourteen cops were shot and five died at the hands of a sniper and former US Army vet. The shootings took place during a protest against police violence and was purportedly carried out as a response to the rampant and unchecked murder of black men and women by cops.), like I see people who that status was directed at posting like support in favour of Black Lives Matter when they in themselves have tons of racial prejudice that I've experienced firsthand. Not calling anyone out specifically, but even Vancouver as whole there's definitely a lot of double standards in the punk scene, but in really subtle ways. And it's small things, but it's tedious and exhausting and most of it is like people are quicker to assume that I'm doing something wrong or thuggish or brash or aggressive, when in reality someone who's not black specifically could be conducting themselves in the exact same way, but what they're doing is ironic or it's "a mistake" but for me it's a flagship instance of like why I'm a bad person or like why I'm an unsavory character or something. That was really all that was about; it bums me out. Or like even, you know, I go to like—as a most baseline thing—it's super silly, but it's exhausting, like going to an '80s pop night and I remember this girl came up to me and we were like dancing to Depeche Mode or something and she's like, "Oh, I didn't expect you to like something like this!" And I'm like, "Why? Like, what did you not expect that?" I don't know, shit like that is silly to me, but it's exhausting.

ASHAMED OF MY KIN
MIXED BLOOD BOILED THIN
THE JEWEL OF AFRICA

It's something that I think every person of colour deals with on a daily basis, especially in communities and cities with a small amount of minorities like Vancouver. And it's all relative, like people experience racism in different parts of the world. Like I think people always try to lump in, like on their check list like, "Oh, we have a POC playing the show," but it might be like a first-generation Chinese person or something and in Vancouver specifically they don't experience the same kind of prejudice that I experience. They definitely do in

(In part as a response to my ignorance on the issue of residential schools, I have since designed a course on the history of residential schools in Canada that is being taught in the ESL program at the college where I work.)

certain ways of course, but it's relative to where you are. Like for example I don't think like Latino people face as much prejudice in Vancouver, I mean I definitely can't speak to that but speaking generally, as much prejudice as like a black person in Vancouver. But in like the southern states, they definitely do. Like in places like Arizona and Phoenix, it's the exact same lived experience as a black person as in like the most of America.

MLC: ***I guess one of the reasons I'm thinking about doing a zine is that geographically I feel removed from any punk and hardcore hotspots at this point in my life. Like I grew up in Belleville, Ontario: shitty town. Fishing…***
Brendan: It's like a military town, isn't it?

MLC: ***Well, that's Trenton, Ontario, the next town over, but I grew up with base brats, hockey players; it was like hockey, fighting, and fishing basically, right? But looking at scenes like Toronto right now, it seems like in some respects things are hopefully getting less dumb, and it seems that there are more thoughtful people involved. S.H.I.T. for example.***
T: Of course, of course, the best.

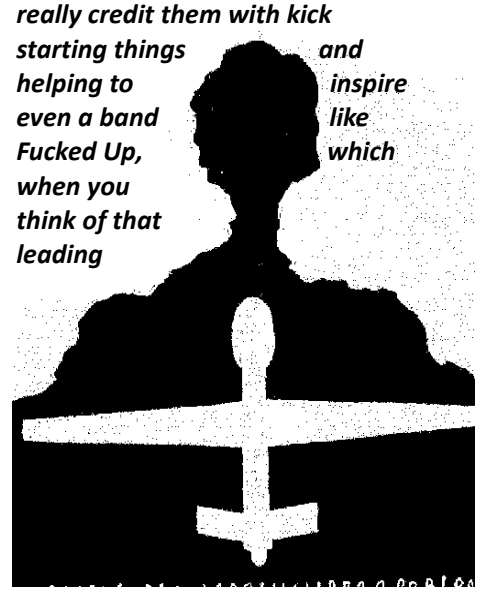
MLC: ***And I do see some... like I know we're decades into this conversation about punk rock and whatnot, but in some places I think hopefully some people are being more conscientious.***
T: In relation to Toronto, having been gone for two and a half years, like the show that we just recently played with Wildside, and Chlorine, and I don't even want to try pronouncing the name Declan's band, I always just call them Sieg Heil.
J: Siyahkal?
T: Yeah. Who else played that? Peer Pressure, Greg's new band. But having left, Toronto is a completely different place from three years ago, and in the best way possible I think. It's super progressive, and I think back in the day it was all the small communities around Toronto that would make up the Toronto scene and people didn't really associate with each other just based on stupid aesthetic preferences and stuff like that. But like now, you watch a band like Wildside and people going off to that band, like there's a whole fucking gamut of different kinds of people going off and it's fucking awesome. I think that Greg has done the best job, and Ryan has done the best job, and Sarde has done the best job. Toronto's definitely a hotspot right now.

MLC: ***I'm probably more enthusiastic about what's happening in Toronto right now than I have been in decades. That period when I was in Japan, I was in Japan for about eight or nine years, had I been in Toronto at that point, that might have been when I would have dropped out of punk and hardcore. Things were dumb at a certain point where I would have…***
T: In Toronto? What bands were coming out in Toronto…?

MLC: ***When I was away? Um, No Warning?***
T: OK, yeah. Do you not like No Warning?

MLC: ***OK, you know what, I missed it and to hear people talk about it, had I been there to see it in a live setting, (they tell me) I would have appreciated it. But my understanding of it is based on what I heard about their interactions with good people in the city…***
T: Yeah, people have heard stories of course.

MLC: ***…and just how meat-headed it was. Like I said, I grew up in Belleville, Ontario, with jocks and… OK, 1984, a friend of mine with a Mohawk got beat up and had his hair cut off by like ten guys while the Principal of our school watched. And the message was just like, "That's what you get. You got a stupid haircut." I would not go to the washroom for a few years in school, because if I went into an enclosed space, I could have been fucked up. So why fucking hang out with wanna-be tough guys in the hardcore scene?***
T: I love that band, but I do think that they brought together two aspects of the suburbs and then the accessible parts of New York hardcore. I think that they brought those things together and I think some of the fall-out from that is definitely not sick. But I also like that band and I like what they did in relation to hardcore, but there are parts of it that obviously I don't like. Like no one likes a chongo, no one likes a jock.
MLC: ***And I can see, a lot of people really credit them with kick starting things and helping to inspire even a band like Fucked Up, which when you think of that leading***



indirectly to Not Dead Yet and all that sort of thing is great. So I'll leave out that No Warning stuff.
T: No, put that *in*!

MLC: ***So, Damon, I got to ask you: son of Ron Reyes, right? How does he look at you participation in this thing he was involved with decades ago, and how encouraging is he of what you're doing?***
D: He's very encouraging. I mean, he's said so many times like, he has like driven our gear to shows in Vancouver so many times, and he always says like, "I never got to drive you to your soccer games when you were younger," because obviously I was never into sports, "so I'm making up for it now by driving you to your gigs."
J: Can I interject with that story about Kamloops real quick?
D: Yeah, do it.
J: We played in the interior of B.C., like a six or seven hour drive outside of Vancouver, three or four months ago. We were looking for a ride, couldn't find one, and Ron stepped up to the plate and drove all our shit to the show—just took his weekend and sunk it into OAF. And the night we were going to crash at this person's house we were trying to offer him the futon, trying to make him comfortable, and he refused to sleep inside.
T: And just slept in the van.
J: Just slept in the fucking van.
T: He was like, "It's like the good old days!" (Laughter)
J: It was awesome. He's just like a fucking road dog.

MLC: ***Did he still feel that way in the morning or?***
T: No, he was good to go.
D: No, he was great in the morning. He woke up before all of us. He went out to get breakfast by himself and then came back to pick us up because we slept in. And it's still that way. Like, he sends me messages and I'm telling him about like all the van troubles we've had on tour and how we've had to like struggle at finding constant solutions…
J: And he saved us…
D: And he's like, "That sounds like fun. I'm jealous. I wish I was with you guys right now."
J: He actually saved our first tour, too. He fixed the oil tank in our van the day before we left.
T: Yeah, he used his Black Flag credibility to get a mechanic to fix our stuff, like the guy was a big big fan apparently. It was sick.

Photo by Daragh

MLC: ***To get closer to wrapping up, by the looks of your Bandcamp you guys are going to the UK in December?***
T: No…
J: Fuck no.
T: That's like some whack ass fucking like juggalo rock shit from the UK.

MLC: ***Oh, so that's just something that was sort of transposed onto your…***
T: I don't really know how bandcamp works, but their tour dates always get posted on our shit.

MLC: ***Well, I just thought it was part of the S.H.I.T. rivalry because like S.H.I.T. have been to the UK.***

J: There's no rivalry… (Laughter)
T: There's no rivalry with like S.H.I.T. I definitely don't want to step to any of those fools 'cause like…
J: Like Greg let me sleep in his basement suite.
T: Yeah, they're like the best band ever.
D: And Bandcamp just sources their shit from the internet so fucking websites like Ticketmaster or whatever, they find shows and they just put that shit on our Bandcamp and all of a sudden people think we're playing a fest in the UK. Fuck the other OAF. We'll fight you if you come to Vancouver.

MLC: ***On the topic of future plans, you have a new recording, E.C.***
T: Yeah, Ecstasy Cabal.
J: I was afraid to put that on the Bandcamp before going over the border.

MLC: ***Ah, so that's why it's so cryptic. Was this just a tape or…?***
T: It's a tape and I have a whole bunch of emails because we're like mad poppin' in the streets, but I got a whole bunch of emails and I'll get to them eventually and we'll let one of you peasants put out our record. (Laughter)

MLC: ***But nothing's been confirmed?***
T: Confirmed, no. I think we have an LP planned that's going to come out on Deranged and that'll probably be what's next. And then I think we're going to try to do like Austin, and then Europe, and then I think we'll break up because that's probably the end of the road unless like…
J: Unless we start getting flown out places. Unless people start buying our plane tickets.

T: Yeah, unless like Lamb of God want to fucking take us on like a sixty-day tour or like S.H.I.T. or something.

(Laughter)

MLC: ***Yes, one of these "fest" bands, right?***
J: Yeah, unless we become a fest band.

MLC: ***That's the goal, to become a fest band.***
T: Fuck yeah.

MLC: ***So I asked you guys about your ages in the first question and again, point of personal interest for me, I wonder how you see your involvement or even level of interest down the line. Arguably punk rock and the form you guys are playing—fairly primitive, fairly gritty, nasty, the whole bit…***
T: Yeah.

MLC: ***Could you still see yourselves having interest or involvement when you hit say, for example (pointing to myself), forty-five years of age, with what is a fairly limited and constrained form of expression?***
J: I think if I don't get any better at guitar by the time I'm forty-five I should not be fucking playing. I don't see myself ever becoming disinterested in punk but I could see myself sort of drifting away from if nothing else the social aspect because that's even super draining right now.
T: Yo, punk is like cutting the check right now, but real hustlers don't stop, they keep going. I'm going to hustle until the day I die so I think I'll have lyrical content. (Laughter) I'm just going to ball 'til I fall.
D: I feel everybody becomes out of touch at some point in their lives, but like I mean if I'm not playing music when I'm fucking fifty years old like, if I'm still like booking shows or like going to shows, or something like that…

T: Ain't no one want to go to no punk show booked by no fifty year old. (To me) No, I'm just playing. (laughter)
D: No, that's what I'm saying.
T: No, if you drop out, you're flat out a poser. Like look at you dog, you're still fucking givin'er and still into good new punk.

MLC: ***But at various points if things aren't really speaking to you, especially what's happening locally, yeah, you lose interest. But then as a result, you find out in retrospect like, "What did I miss?" Well, thanks for taking the time to talk. I hope that didn't take up too much of your time.***
J: There's one thing that I'd like to add, I've spoken a lot in this about my ancestry in the interview and while I am indigenous I don't identify as a person of colour. My dad's white, I take after him a lot and am white passing as fuck, and I've had the privilege that comes along with that.
T: Yeah, I fucking hate when people like do some tokenizing shit and all this. Like, obviously that is an aspect of our band for sure, like being a minority. But don't like put us on your POC checklist shit because that shit is whack or because we have like one female member on some female-oriented band shit because I think that is whack too.

(After continuing to talk, I start the tape back up again.)

T: So there's this bar called [redacted] Winkerbeans. I think the girl [redacted] who books stuff there, she used to run this venue in Vancouver that was notorious for punk in Vancouver called the Cobalt, which is now like the hip… they do like rap nights and hip shit there and whatever.

J: Still run by fucking scumbags.
T: Yeah, it's run by scumbags, whatever. So she started [redacted] and it's just kind of a venue that fucking Poison Idea will play, Poison Idea in 2016, which is not...

MLC: ***Who are still good!***
T: No way, they can get out of here.

MLC: ***Did you see it?***
T: It's like one dude and scabs.
Brendan: (Directed at me) For you to say that, it blows my mind.
T: Or like Discharge in 2016? That shit is a fucking joke. And they just do stuff like that and there was like a big beef between young bands and like our DIY scene and like a punk bar who just thought that we weren't giving them their credit due when they're all like fucking misogynist, sexist, probably racist pieces of shit.
D: Definitely racist.
T: Definitely racist, yeah. Like I just don't understand the concept of being older and knocking what young bands are doing. That's like fucking ridiculous.

MLC: ***Well, this is the whole thing. We were talking about documentaries (earlier in the night prior to the interview) but American Hardcore, when I first saw that back in 2006, I was depressed. I said to my friend, I turned to him and I said, "This makes me feel like I just wasted twenty years of my life." Watching these fucking tired dudes say how it's over, but regardless they've been relying on it for their paycheck for like…***

[Fine, don't believe me, but I've seen some grandpa acts (Poison Idea, UK Subs) pull off some amazing sets over the past year. Even D.O.A.--I'd told myself on more than one occasion that I was never going to see that band again--were better than at any point since the '80s. Yeah, weird, but I'll take it.]

T: When they say that shit ended in like ’76, they’re fucking…
J: They said that it was done in like ’85 I think.

T: Like Madball wasn’t even a band yet.
MLC: ***But that’s the thing. Everyone is like if you’ve arrived six months later you’ve missed it and it’s no longer legitimate.***
B: I think people still do that though.

MLC: ***Oh, totally. And I have to say, in my defense, I never refer to myself as old because (pause) I don’t wanna. (Laughter)***
B: You’re the youngest dude I know. (Laughter) Even with bands like No Warning and bands like Left for Dead, people look up to that era as like…
J: They’re look at as being at the same level as the original…
B: Exactly. Yeah, yeah.
J: It’s just as crucial for them.
T: I think there were lots of bands that started in the ’80s and ’90s that were just as important as bands that started in the ’70s for sure.
J: Oh, definitely.
T: No question. Like I said, Madball wasn’t even a band yet. Enough said!

Many thanks to Ryan Rose for permission to use some of his photos: ***http://www.ryanrose.ca/***

Photo by Angela Owens (**http://www.angelaowens.com**)

OAF bassist Cera Bryn was interviewed at *Faith/Void Records* in Toronto during Not Dead Yet 2016. It was sheer coincidence that we met at the shop, but I used the opportunity to ask some questions as she wasn't present for the OAF interview elsewhere in these pages.

MLC: ***I met the other guys in OAF back in July when they came through London and you had just left the tour to get back to…***
Cera: To Vancouver…

MLC: ***… to work and I'm curious because I'd asked the other guys what they had done band-wise prior to OAF: had you played before in any bands prior to OAF?***
C: Honestly, I'd played in a couple of bands that didn't really go anywhere and they were not very good. And uh, they're not bands that I would be interested in being in or listening to today. In high school I played in some embarrassing shitty bands so… (laughter) I think there's a huge difference, there's an age gap now where Tumbler and the internet is a big thing so it's easier to discover good music; it's more accessible, you know? And when I was young and in high school and into music, I mean I listened to hardcore, and there was a big all ages hardcore scene in North Van where I spent a little bit of time growing up, but it was just harder to discover good music so you had to kind of go through some awful phases before you blossom into that…

MLC: ***Well of course. But also for me, I feel I'm still peeling back layers of the onion where I'm finding out about new bands where I'm like, "I didn't know about this!" Now you mentioned an earlier Vancouver scene, was this the late straight edge kind of thing?***
C: Yeah, I did a lot of volunteering on this committee, it was called Seylynn Hall. In North Van there was a skate bowl; it's still around today, it's actually a daycare and stuff, but we would do all ages shows there because it was a hall. There was no alcohol and stuff. It was a really posi-hardcore kind of community and probably my favourite band that came out of that was a band called Reserve 34. They're great. It was a lot of posi-hardcore, we did a lot of D.O.A. shows and that kind of stuff there. It was all run by a couple of older guys and they organized the committee and it was all young people into punk and hardcore. It was all ages, it was good.

MLC: ***How was that dynamic? Because it's tough to negotiate sometimes with that age gap. And I guess there's that awareness among younger people that the older guys are totally out of touch and at the same time the older people thinking that the younger people don't know what it's all about either. Was that ever tricky to navigate if you've got older people and younger people working together on a project?***
C: Honestly no, because of the band that I mentioned before, Reserve 34. Matt Smith, one of the guys who ran the committee, wasn't that much older. He's probably ten years older than me. I think he was just a straight edge… like a really cool dude who was trying to foster the music community and steer kids in the right direction. It gave us something to do. I'm not saying we weren't drinking under the bridge a hundred feet away or whatever, but they set it up for us to take control and be able to put on the shows. I feel like a lot of the people from that scene are still participating today and play in really good bands now, which is great. One of my good friends Nick is the drummer in Vacant State, he was part of that Seylynn Hall committee as well. Yeah, the older guys, I don't know, it was a very positive teacher-guidance kind of relationship where I think they were trying to plant the seed of good music and participation in music.

MLC: ***So you were with OAF from the outset? Is that correct?***
C: No, actually it took a while for us… I was not an original member of OAF. Some of the guys who started it, they're very technically skilled, really smart techy hardcore guys…

MLC: ***Well they said they got rid of those guys really quickly… (laughter)***
C: (laughter) Well, I think that they left. The first two OAF demos, they're great, but they're very different, almost like a completely different band. The sound is similar in some

(Update! The very weekend this zine is being printed OAF are playing a final show in Olympia, WA. Not sure of the line-up or the details, but there you go.)

respects, but very different. Kyle and Trevor were in the band originally—they're great musicians. I think they were trying to go in a bit of a different direction. Maybe there was some clashing of seriousness… I'm not sure how it really went, but I think that they left the band and then OAF struggled for a while to get a solid line-up. There was a bit of a dip for a while then Jacob kind of mentioned it to me in passing and I didn't take it seriously at first, but it ended up working out. Those guys definitely helped me play better and I was way worse before. So we got together and it kind of stuck for a while and I think the music changed for the better.

MLC: ***I talked about that with those guys. Comparing those earlier demos with the most recent release it's getting rawer, more primitive and they were like, "Oh yeah, we're regressing."***
C: Yeah, oh don't get me wrong, I can't play my instrument at all. (laughter) OK, I mean I can play bass, but I'm definitely not as skilled as the guys that were in the band initially—those guys can play anything. I guess you could say it's a regression, but I kind of like dumber music. (laughter)

MLC: ***But there's something about things being direct and then there's little room to dull that impact; it's just so much more immediate sometimes.***
C: Yeah, it definitely took a turn from more serious hardcore to raw punk hardcore.

MLC: ***Regarding that transition from being involved with a more posi-hardcore scene and then your involvement with OAF and the embrace of that rawness, was that reaction to your previous involvement or your former self?***
C: No, I mean, I've always been into hardcore, but I definitely go in the punk direction. Like I love hardcore, but I don't really do capital "H" hardcore or really bro-clean-hardcore, you know? I'm not really into that kind of stuff. I participated in that for a while, but there was such a huge amount of time between being involved with Seylynn Hall. That was when I was in high school, and then I was just going to shows and participating a little bit but just kind of as an attendee. And OAF, it's not really in reaction to anything, I just fucking love OAF. It's a great band and they're like my best friends too.

MLC: ***Recently I caught an interview with you in La Peste zine. You mentioned was that sometimes it was a struggle with nowadays male conversations and Tinder and cell phones and everything. Is that something you'd care to comment on? Obviously as you said, you love the guys and being in the band, so I'm not saying speak ill of the dead band or band members but…***
C: Oh no, I mean I just think they're really smart people in general so it could be a lot worse. I am just really sensitive to some topics and naturally when you're hanging out with a group of any people for that long there's bound to be clashes in subject matter and stuff. I don't really mind, but you know tour is like… tensions can run high when you're tired and you're stressed out and you're constantly on the move and stuff. So every once in a while I just get really… when you're talking to five guys and you're the only girl in a very small enclosed space, sometimes I just don't want to talk about girls and that kind of stuff, but I mean that's pretty much it. If I'm having those conversations just in any normal setting when I'm at home it's fine, you know? We'd talk about gross dumb shit all the time, but sometimes if I don't have a choice I don't really want to talk about jerking off to be honest. (much laughter) But I don't really care. I think I just get really stressed out when I'm on tour and sometimes it annoys me, but they're really solid guys and I would definitely not say that they are on the more negative end of the spectrum. I've met guys who are disgusting and talk about some awful shit regarding women and stuff and they are not those kind of guys.

MLC: ***(After a brief interruption) The band recently called it a day, but is there anything that you still would have liked to accomplish or done with OAF?***

(Edited for space: My general griping about sleazebag comments from former band members. Shit that is so tiring, embarrassing, unnecessary and needs to be long gone from punk.)

C: Oh yeah, for sure. I support whatever decision is in the best interests of the band. So if there are people who are just struggling in any way and just feel like they can't keep it up, or it's just become a little bit too much responsibility, or for whatever reason, I totally support that. Truth be told, Jacob took a lot on in OAF. He's very responsible and solid. He'll follow up on all the boring details that the rest of us don't, and do all the responsible shit so I think it was just a lot of weight on his back. But Tony and everybody does a lot, but I definitely didn't do as much of that stuff for whatever reason, so I probably wasn't feeling as much pressure. And there were just a lot of shitty money situations with our van breaking down and getting a van in the first place, so I think it takes a toll after a while. I would have liked to continue, but I don't want to continue if it's stressing some people out, right? I only want to continue if it's a really positive thing and everyone's on the same page—there's no point otherwise. But I mean if tomorrow everyone in OAF was like, "Oh, let's get together. I have a couple of songs and I want to put them out," I would immediately say yes.

MLC: ***Well, that's great that the band ended without any hard feelings.***
C: Oh no, it wasn't like that. It wasn't like we're fighting drama or anything like that. I think it was just some stress and some people needed some time for their own mental health.

MLC: ***And particularly on the heels of a tour; as fun as it is, it can be a stressful thing.***
C: When you're good friends with someone and then you're with someone every single day and every single night, there's just bound to be bickering and stuff, but I love everybody in OAF. They're all the best.

MLC: ***I've gone away with bands where there's almost been fist fights on stage—things got that intense. The sad thing is that as pathetic and as trivial as it seems in retrospect, merely recalling those situations… well, those feelings, they bubble up again, right? (laughter)***
C: It's that when you're involved with something that you care about and something that you feel portrays you… a band is like your baby, right? It's very important to you, and there's just bound to be drama and stuff.

MLC: ***And everything that happens, especially with a band, ends up reflecting on you as well. So how somebody presents themselves, that's sending a message about you as well, and that's very tricky sometimes.***
C: Yeah.

MLC: ***Now you make a lot of custom leather work, but is there more music on the horizon?***
C: Yeah, I'm kind of in a transition mode at the moment now that OAF is done. There are a couple of ties I had that ended relationship-wise in Vancouver, so I don't really have much… Like Vancouver's not inspiring me and the music scene is not bumping right now really so I'm actually about to move. I'm getting ready to move to Toronto. I have a lot of friends here and we're in talks of doing stuff here. But right now I'm not really focusing on starting up a new band that's going to be really serious. I've talked to a couple of people about just jamming and getting together and seeing what happens in Vancouver, but I'm kind of leaning towards getting my shit together to get to Toronto and then when I get here there will definitely be something on the up.

MLC: ***With the leather work you're doing, do you find that it fulfills some of the same creative impulses as playing music? Do you see any parallels between the two?***
C: Yeah, I've always been really into fashion so I've been doing this since before the band actually. But I feel they kind of go together because I get to come to (Not Dead Yet) and the stuff that I make is ingrained in punk fashion history anyways so it does kind of go together. Like I'm at Not Dead Yet participating with my leather although I'm not playing this year. I guess it's sort of similar, but it's not like I'm performing, right? I feel that a lot of the band aspect is the energy and the rush and that's really fun.

(All photos and images accompanying this interview were pilfered from the Instagram accounts of various OAF members. No names were associated with the pictures, but I would love to give credit where it is due in the next issue if possible.)

NoMeansNo were a Canadian institution. They played some of the best sets of any Canadian band that I saw in the late '80s and early '90s and they were definitely a cut above musically and lyrically—not to mention in terms of the sheer intensity and stamina that they brought to their live shows. Sadly, I took their existence for granted for a number of years and stopped paying as much attention following the departure of guitarist Andy Kerr in 1992. After catching them on tour with "new" guitarist Tom Holliston in 1995, I thought, "OK, it's not the same, I'm done with these guys for a bit." While I kept up with their recordings here and there, I didn't see them live again until fourteen years later in 2009. Suffice it to say, that was a mistake. While they lacked some of the manic energy from the 1980s and early 1990s, they remained a force to be reckoned with live. With the announcement of their retirement in September, 2016, I spent some time revisiting their entire catalogue and gems abound throughout.

What is more, the way that they announced their exit —with little more fanfare than a brief online post and no accompanying 'last' show or 'final' tour to capitalize on their retirement *(not that these terms carry a lot of weight where B.C. punk bands are concerned *cough-DOA-cough*)*—speaks to the understated and down-to-earth approach that characterized much of their career (e.g. few if any publicity photos, not even naming all of the band members on their releases, and—resolutely independent until the end—never grasping at the brass ring of signing to a major that many less credible acts fell prey to in the 1990s). NoMeansNo 1979-2016 RIP.

NoMeansNo were interviewed in 1988 outside the Silver Dollar in Toronto. I'd caught them on a previous tour, but my friends and I were turned away at the door that night for being underage. We hung around regardless and the band were kind enough to let me interview them after their set before rushing off to do an interview at one of the local college radio stations. (CKLN? CHRY? CIUT? I'm not sure.) It's not the most revealing of interviews, but the band's responses definitely outshine my fairly generic line of questioning. Thanks to Jason Addy for helping to get the interview started…

JASON: ***What's your favourite colour?***
ROB: (Looking at Jason's black & white C.O.C. *Eye for an Eye* shirt) Black and white, pal!

MLC: ***Your style of music is really unique and there's not a lot of bands touring around the hardcore circuit doing the type of thing that you guys are doing. Do you feel lucky to have been accepted so well by this crowd?***
ANDY: Yeah! Very much so.
ROB: Yeah, I was always surprised. I mean we started out as a two piece, with bass and drums, originally and again, always playing to mostly punk or hardcore audiences. Ah, there was no such distinction in those days, but we've always managed to win people over, especially in that kind of crowd.
ANDY: It's our serious charm.
ROB: Yeah, it's our serious charm or maybe it's Craig the soundman's ability... (pauses) no, no, it's the charm. But yeah, I think really why they like it is because even though it may not contain all the standard formulas of hardcore, it still has the energy and the sort of drive and the sort of punch to it that they like and I think they only like it more because it varies. It's not just "Stop, start, go real fast, stop," you know? (Laughs)

MLC: ***Do you feel boxed in though by having primarily this specific audience coming to the shows?***
ROB: No, I feel boxed in by the fact that there are so few people who can listen to something different and appreciate it. I'm very happy that the people in the hardcore scene will like and accept this kind of music, I'm just sorry that a lot of other people can't do the same thing. But sure, you're lucky to get the audience you have right?

MLC: ***I know you do a lot of touring and you like to convey a lot of energy at the shows, but does it ever get to be a real strain just to keep the energy level up?***

(Do young nowadays punks care about NoMeansNo? I wonder if NMN's appeal was hampered by their age, longevity, or even label affiliations rather than the music. Would interest be greater if NMN had disbanded in 1986 and were simply a cult band with a less extensive discography? See graffiti at end of this piece.)

ANDY: (While Rob laughs in the background) Yes! Yes! Speaking of strain...
ROB: ...talk about the last month!
ANDY: Tonight for instance it was super hot onstage and it's hard for any of us to just sort of go, "Ok! Right! Ok! Now this is a song from our last..." (sounding very enthused) It's more like, "Ahhh, God, what song do you want to do now?"
ROB: And you tend to play a lot of the same songs over a tour in your set and when it's hot and when you've done it a bunch of times, it's hard to make it a little something more than just a run through, right? I hope that we do that most of the time, but I'm afraid that a lot of the time we don't at the end of a four month tour. Which is why we regularly do *not* tour for four months, or even three months, or even two months.
ANDY: But we did this year.
ROB: The optimum tour I think to give really solid shows every time you play is like four or five weeks and anyone who tours over that either has a real heavy constitution or is just basically skating a lot on shows.
ANDY: And nuts!
ROB: Yeah, and when you think you're doing like thirty-sixty shows, if you fluff up a few of them you don't really count them because you've done sixty shows. But for the person who's at that show, that was the one show they saw. So it's not really a good idea to burn yourself out; it defeats the purpose. You tour to play to people and play good shows and if you tour too long and don't play good shows, what's the point in playing at all? But we had to do it for various circumstances at the time, the Europe thing, going to New York for the (New Music) Seminar...
ANDY: I think in Europe we generally had lots of good shows because I don't think we were so burnt out then. In the States it was really off and on. We had a lot of bad luck down there too, a lot of equipment failure and a lot of really hot shows and a lot of crowds who were either not into the music or were just too tired.
ROB: We had a band called the Beatnigs back us up who would burn anybody up. They were really good and a lot of times they just burnt the audience out and there wasn't much left when we played, which is all fair. All's fair in love and war and rock and roll.

MLC: ***In an issue of the German fanzine ZAP that I recently read, you were comparing the North American and European scenes and you said that here it's the money and club owners that make things possible, that without the money things wouldn't be happening, but in Europe it's the people that are making the things happen.***
ROB: I'd say that's a fair assessment. It's too bad in North America that they're just fixated on the dollar and there are very few community oriented, volunteer type, youth center type of organizations here. It's always that somebody owns

the club and he's making money off the booze and that's his main concern. And therefore the music becomes secondary.
ANDY: I think too that the authorities here are a bit more paranoid. They think when you get a bunch of kids together they're going to start drinking, but in Germany it's like, of course they're going to start drinking because they can do that. People can drink there when they're sixteen and I don't think the attitude towards drinking is the same as it is in North America.
ROB: I think it's a combination of things being a little more mercenary over here and a little more uptight about kids having fun. Over there they seem to be a little more relaxed and don't expect kids to be sitting at home quietly knitting or reading a book or watching T.V., which is the only other alternative in this country. But that's the way it is. I mean I think a lot of people on the continent should be happy that they have their scene and not look so much to the United States scene and that type of music. I noticed a lot of German bands playing to German audiences and singing in English. I mean, why? Why would you want to do that? The scene in L.A. is not as good as the scene in Hamburg or in all the other little towns that we played in. Be satisfied with what you have, it's better.

MLC: ***You're saying there's a lack of activity here in so far as things like youth centers or squats go, but do you think it's just due to what you were saying, the authorities being so***

(Friends who saw NoMeansNo's first Toronto show told me about being approached outside the club by an old guy with grey hair wearing a trench coat and tweed hat who proceeded to strike up a conversation with them. When he pulled out a pipe and started smoking, my friends could barely contain their laughter.)

strict here, or do you think that maybe not all the people are so dedicated over here?

ANDY: I think it's a combination of the two. Because the authorities or the powers that be, the club owners or whatever, make it such a fucking hassle to put on a show, people are going like, "Why do I want to spend my time and my money"—and shows over here are far more expensive to put on—"to put on something that'll probably get shut down by the cops?"

ROB: Also it's like the T.V. generation. In North America it's usually one guy that does all the work because everyone else just expects to pay the five bucks and watch the show and if it's not interesting they'll switch channels and go watch the girls or something. In Germany or on the continent they seem to have more of an idea that if everyone participates and puts a little time in, it can happen a lot easier and no one person is saddled with all the responsibility and all the work or all the money expense. If you can get together with somebody and help a guy make a few phone calls, long distance phone calls, to arrange gigs and stuff, you may spend twenty bucks, but it keeps him from having to pay hundreds and not being able to do it and not having bands tour around. I mean, it's just little things. People don't realize if they want things to happen, they're going to have to get involved and help make them happen. They're going to have to maybe help clean up after a show or do the door or do the stage or sell pop or something like that and not to take money from it but just to be part of the show.

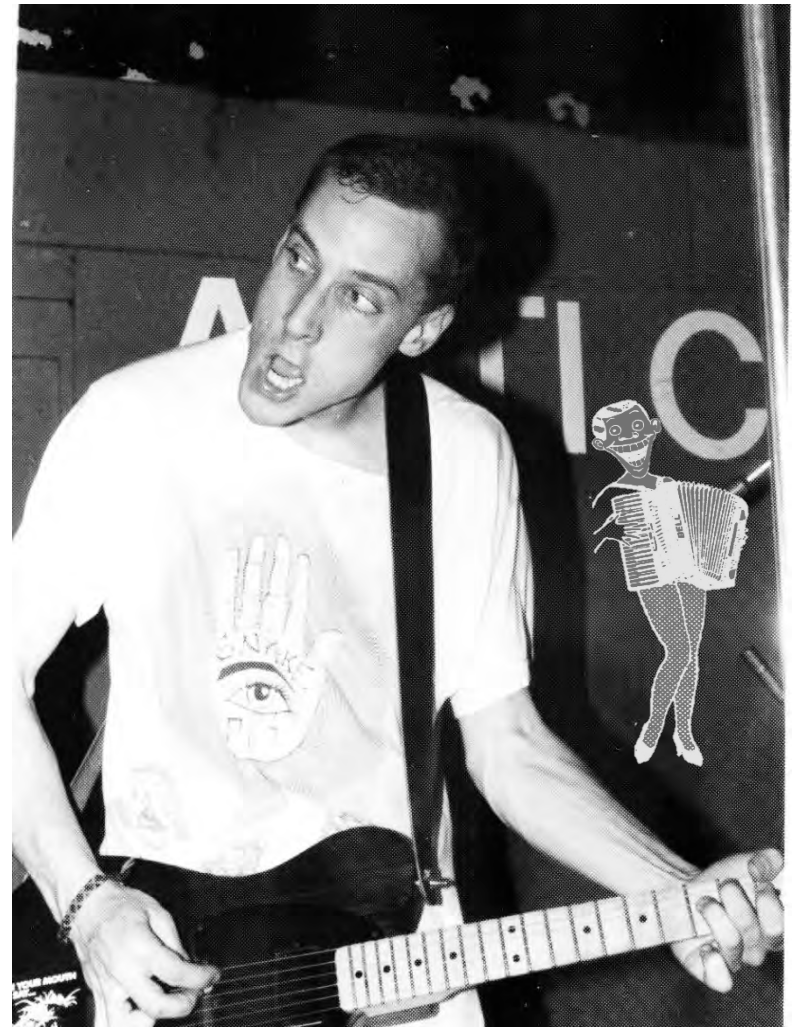
ANDY: I don't think there's got to be this great morality about it like, "Hey man, what about THE SCENE?" and "the scene" this and "the scene" that and all this. It's good that people do good things, but this whole positive mental attitude thing to me seems like totally full of bullshit as far as I'm concerned. But that's not to say that people still can't work together a little and try to get something done.

ROB: You don't need a lot of verbals, a lot of talk trend, and a lot of dogma. You just need people doing things.

ANDY: You don't need people with X's on their hands telling other people not to drink. What kind of freedom is that? It's just fascism when it comes down to it.

MLC: ***In many towns I visited (in Europe) there seemed to be much more of a hardcore community. They were always in it together like, "Yeah, we got this band here together and he always does this and she always does that" so it's not just like one person, a promotor, in each town.***

ROB: The offside of that is that again, the people in the continent totally tend to ape American styles and forms of music. With a few exceptions, they tend to follow very slavishly like the L.A. hardcore scene or the positive attitude scene or whatever. On the one hand, they have a great scene. On the other hand, they seem to be afraid of just being themselves. I'd like to see the German bands play



German hardcore, their own kind of music and express their own problems in their own way and sing in their own language.

MLC: ***One thing I noticed is that some American bands would come over and play like shit and that people went nuts anyways. (Specifics? Oh, hi there 1988 Gang Green.)***

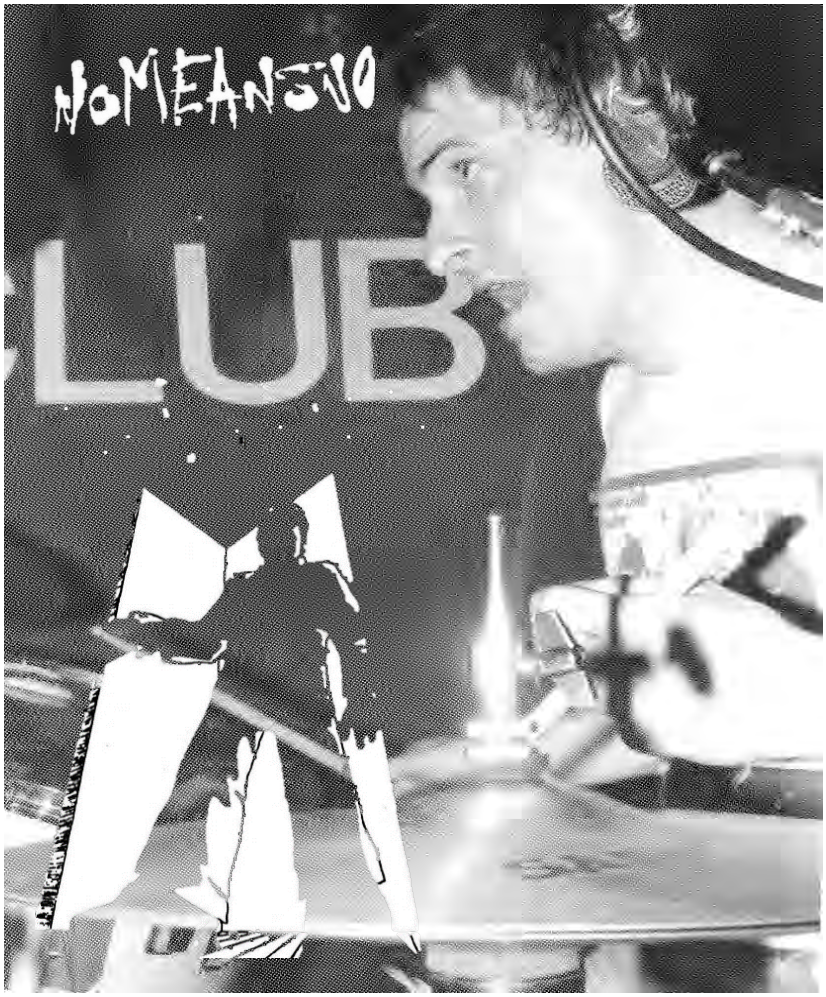
ROB: Yeah? (Laughs)

MLC: ***OK, you did an independent tour of Europe and in a lot of ways for a band of your size that must be a real risk. Do you think it was worth it?***

ROB: Yeah and it's not that much of a risk touring Europe as we found out. I mean we were worried when we were going over, but we went over and we played a lot of shows and broke even basically. I think next time we go over we could come back with some money, tour really successfully and have good shows. That's the whole point of the thing. I think it's more risky to cross the border and go down to the States and tour, way more. And at all levels, you know? You tend to burn yourselves out and you lose money.

MLC: ***One thing I heard about tonight was there were a lot of people dancing really aggressively and a lot of your music is really aggressive. When your music is being played loudly, I could see a lot of these feelings being brought out in people in a way that your songs lyrically seem to oppose...***

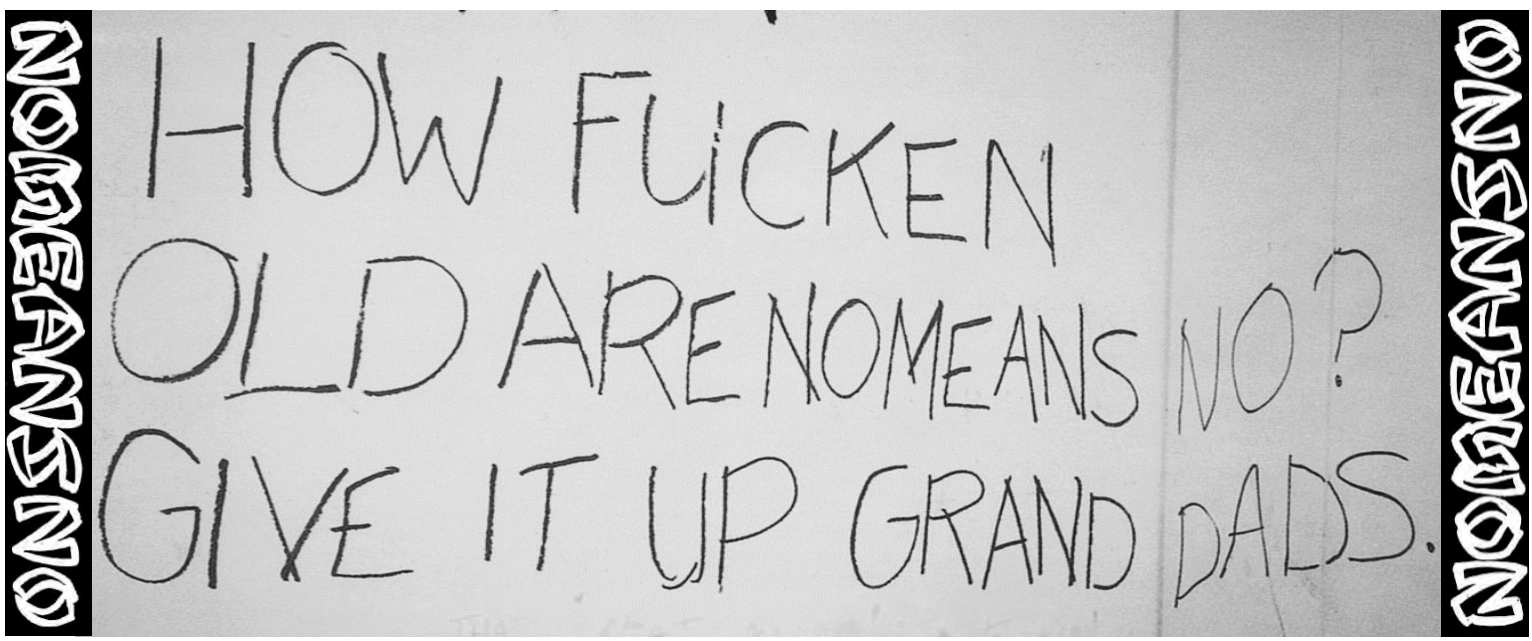
(So yes, the "old guy" turns out to be bass player Rob Wright—32 years of age at the time—who astonished everyone when NMN took the stage that night.)



ANDY: Well it's not so much that we're singing against them, it's the fact that... There's nothing wrong with bringing out the more primitive or ugly or natural feelings inside of you and bringing that up, but what you do with them is another story. If people are going to beat the shit out of each other on the floor that may be an expression of aggression, but the whole point for us anyways, is that there are other ways to express that aggression. It's like, "Dance, move your ass!" It's like in Montreal, "Move your ass instead of your elbows for Christ's sake!" Get down and dance. You don't need to put aggression in some sort of box and take it out on somebody else. That's the whole point, well for me anyway. When I get up onstage and play, it's like an exorcism almost. It's like some sort of creative way of taking energy that makes we want to like, like murder some jock on the street, and just sort of put it in some other context and maybe do something productive with it.

ROB: You have to realize that people aren't perfect and that for all the good things they have inside, they have as many or more bad things. The thing is you have to recognize that and accept it but you don't have to accept the acting out of it. You don't have to accept the oppression that people buy it in. What you should do is just understand it and like release it onstage or in an audience thrashing around, but at the same time you have to be careful of other people and stuff like that. It's very hard to control, an audience. If people want to beat up each other, they will and there's not much you can do about it except maybe stop playing and tell them to stop and say that you're not going to play until they do. We've done that on several occasions. And it wasn't too bad tonight. It seems to me that a lot of people were pretty aggressive, but they were also being pretty friendly to each other and there were no real fist fights or anything like that. I do find it annoying that a lot of women can't come up and just dance and not be afraid of some guy trotting over them or being trampled. You can only go with the audience you have, and if that's the way they want to do it for a while hopefully they'll change and like you say, shake their hips instead of swinging their elbows.

ANDY: That's where it is, that's where it's from man! The fucking crotch! (Laughter)



(The live photos accompanying this interview were sent to me from someone in California in response to a classified ad that I ran in Flipside fanzine in 1988. The photos have sat in a box ever since and were long separated from any accompanying letter or information to identify the photographer. The above graffiti image is taken from NMN's The People's Choice CD.)

All Hail the Record Store: Pete Genest / Hits and Misses

If you've sought out punk records in Portland, Seattle, Toronto or Vancouver at some point between the early nineties through to 2015, there's a decent chance you had the good fortune of visiting a shop run by Pete Genest. I first met Pete in 2007 shortly after he opened Hits and Misses record shop in Toronto. Pete was always affable, if not often visibly stressed due to the financial strain of running the store, and I know I am one of many who scored some great records at fair prices during the five year run of his Toronto location. A few years after pulling up stakes in Toronto, Pete relocated the shop to Vancouver and shortly thereafter threw in the towel after almost a quarter century of running punk record stores.

This was another spontaneous interview on my part. Pete happened to be visiting Toronto in the fall of 2016 and walked into the Faith/Void shop on a day that I was also passing through town. The interview meanders somewhat as I definitely wasn't planning on interviewing Pete that afternoon, but I hope it provides some insight into his time running punk record stores and the specific challenges that operating a brick and mortar shop entails.

MLC: To get started, you have a long and storied history, not only doing record stores, but also in punk rock. I know you have an older brother who was in the Young Lions.
P: Yeah.

MLC: So was he instrumental in getting you involved in punk rock?
P: Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

MLC: How did that unfold? What were your first impressions of this stuff that he was bringing home?
P: Well, actually, we grew up with our grandparents here in Toronto and he moved out of his room in the house and moved up into the attic. He would spray paint names of bands on the wall and I was, I would have been thirteen…

MLC: What was the age difference?
P: Just three years, he's three years older. But he was bringing stuff home and I'd hear the stuff blasting from the attic and I was like, "It sounds *OK*" (hesitantly), but I was listening to the Bay City Rollers and the Beach Boys and the Beatles and that kind of stuff and the Stampeders. So it didn't really catch on me, but he was listening to the Clash and the New York Dolls and the Pistols and stuff like that.

MLC: So this would have been the late '70s then.
P: Yeah, that was like '78.

MLC: Were you watching the Bay City Rollers Saturday morning TV show at that point? That's how I actually got into them through watching their TV series.
P: I never actually saw their TV series.

MLC: Oh my goodness! ***(MLC Note:*** *The show aired from 1978-1979, a period when I also spent most Saturday afternoons at the Bay City Rollarena in Belleville, Ontario.)*
P: It was very funny, I think it was the A&A store on Yonge Street and I remember going in there and buying the second Bay City Rollers record, and taking it up to the counter. You know, I was like ten years old or something like that, and the guy was looking me up and down and making me feel uncomfortable and I was just like, (in a very timid voice) "Um, I'm buying it for my sister for a birthday present?" And honest to god, that look though, transpired into when I opened up a store…

MLC: And you said, "I want that job!" [laughter]
P: No, no, what I said to myself was that I will never look down on somebody for what they are buying in my store because of that guy. It stuck with me, which was very weird, but anyone that's ever worked for me I told them, "Do not pass judgement on anybody buying anything, they're buying something at our store."

MLC: I've definitely had that experience in Toronto, and fortunately not from anyone that continues to work in record stores these days. But I would think, "I'm in *your* shop, I'm buying something that *you* have for sale, and *you're* making fun of me for it? I mean, if you're too cool for this stuff, don't sell it in your shop and don't take my money."
P: Yeah, but to get back to the question at hand… So I did hear that stuff coming from the attic and it wasn't until I moved out to Salem, Oregon with my folks (that it started to grab a hold of me). Unfortunately, I moved out there right as they were starting the Young Lions, when he and Mike got together. Actually they were called Johnny Angel, you know that fifties song? That's what they were originally called. They would do covers, like sixties stuff, and then they started writing their own songs and they were just like, "Hey, this is more fun doing this. Let's just do this."

MLC: But they were into punk rock before Johnny Angel started, right?

(Label art taken from The Young Lions 1982-1984 discography on Schizophrenic Records.)

P: That's actually how he and Mike got together. They weren't old enough to get into the clubs so they'd stand outside when the Viletones or whatever were playing. The Viletones were the ones who gave them their first break, they gave them an opening slot. It must have been the tail end of the Viletones or something.

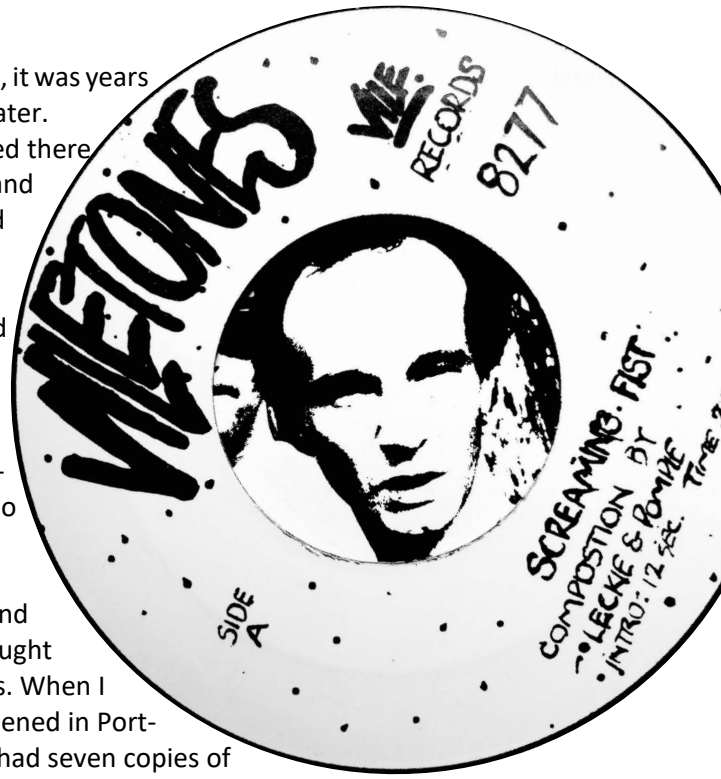
MLC: Well, we're still in the tail end of the Viletones so…
P: Yeah. [laughter] I guess if he's (Steve Leckie) still alive, then yeah. But, it would have been in 1981, Chris sent me a home-made cassette and the beginning of it was the first Young Lions demo and then the rest of it was a compilation of DOA, the Subhumans, the Jam, the Clash, the Ruts, Viletones, and I was just fucking hooked, "This is amazing!" I was listening to what I guess you would call new wavy stuff like Elvis Costello, the Clash, that kind of stuff. And this was harder, this just segued… like the Ruts' "Babylon's Burning" was the song, and he put on "Dope for Guns" and I was like, "These guys are *amazing*!" and I was hooked.

MLC: So you had this treasure from your older brother that he mailed to you…
P: And then he would also, we didn't talk on the phone that much—it was long distance and it was still back in the old days—so we'd mail letters and he would send me a letter saying, "Check out this band Hüsker Dü, check out the Vandals, check out the Bad Brains," you know?

MLC: I'm not familiar with Salem. Was it easy for you to find that sort of stuff on the ground there? Was there a record store for people that were into it?
P: There was a store and actually I worked at that store. It was part of what made me want to have my own store, but I worked there just very part time the last two years that I was in high school. There were two owners and whenever either one of them couldn't work, I would work; I was sort of the only employee. It was a cool store but it wasn't new, it was all second hand. Like, I remember (Circle Jerks') *Wild in the Streets* came in used there. Salem is about an hour south of Portland and about an hour north of Eugene, so we had to go to either Eugene or Portland to go buy records because there were stores there that carried new stuff. I remember going to Eugene and getting *That's Life* by Sham right after that came out, but stuff like that, you couldn't find that in Salem.

MLC: So you had your initial foray into working in a record shop in this small town in Oregon when you were in high school. Did that plant the seed of wanting to have your own shop?
P: Yes, absolutely. I was like, "This is fucking cool! This is fucking cool!"

MLC: So what form did that transition take? That process of going from a part time employee to actually getting your own space?



P: Well, it was years years later. I worked there in '82 and '83 and then I first opened my store in '92 in Portland—so for ten years I went and just bought records. When I first opened in Portland, I had seven copies of Ramones *Leave Home* with "Carbona Not Glue" because every time I saw it and it had "Carbona Not Glue," I bought it just thinking, "I'm going to open up a store one day and I'm going to need copies of this."

MLC: Laying the groundwork basically.
P: Yes, and I did what most record collectors do: every payday you go around to the record shops and you do the rounds, you go and see what they got and just buy, buy, buy. Eat Mr. Noodles so you can buy more records. Drink the cheapest beer, smoke the cheapest cigarettes so you can buy more records.

MLC: It's funny what a paltry investment it was sometimes. I'm thinking about my initial trips to Toronto, my thought process was often, "I could either get that slice of pizza or I could get another 7" before I take the Greyhound bus home at midnight." You'd calculate everything in terms of how many records buying something else equates to. You mentioned that Ramones' record, were there any other releases you had small stockpiles of in retrospect when you opened that would blow people's minds today? I mean, did you have ten copies of *Filler* or something like that?
P: No, I didn't. I mean some things I'd have doubles of. Like I said, over the ten years I was sort of building towards this whenever I would find something like, "Oh, there's the New York Dolls' second record, which I already have, but it's three bucks, I'll just buy this." And this was back when you could still buy records for three dollars and four dollars.

MLC: I remember being down in Amoeba records in '93 and '94 when I was roadieing for bands. That was still the stage when it was amazing what was out there for a buck or two because people were buying CDs. And there was so much stuff I didn't buy because I wasn't spending a lot on tour. I remember being

(Freddy Pompeii of the Viletones was 1st generation Toronto/Philadelphia punk royalty who—from what I've seen in interviews and heard from others—was as down to earth and as free of attitude as they come—not qualities commonly associated w/the Viletones! Freddy Pompeii RIP!)

a bit appalled seeing Skrewdriver records in the dollar bin and a little part of me being tempted to buy one as a joke for a friend, but I felt that I couldn't in good conscience even pay a dollar for it. But sometimes it's incredible when you think of what was basically being thrown away at that point and what things are worth now. Since you were involved with record collecting from a very early stage, would you ever have predicted the inflated prices that…
P: No, never. I mean you used to see in Portland the Sado-Nation 7" in the dollar bin and Poison Idea 7"s in the dollar bin and the full lengths for three and four dollars. But that's back in the eighties when those records brand new were only $7.99 and $8.99. Lord knows how many Poison Idea records I sold. As I said, I had no idea how much this shit would just inflate.

MLC: I remember I was in England in the winter of 1987 and seeing Misfits singles, which would have been prior to them being booted because it was still the late eighties. I think the price at the time was 20 pounds, which I think equated to roughly forty dollars. I remember thinking, "Forty dollars? Who the hell would ever pay forty dollars for a 7"?" And this guy had a market stall and he had two or three Misfits 7"s and I just thought it was absurd. I mean you could buy almost six LPs for that so the arithmetic just didn't really compute for me.
P: You could buy forty Angelic Upstarts singles for that price! [laughter]

MLC: There was one local store in Belleville called Zap Records in the eighties and a sister of one of the guys in The Fits lived in town and I picked up five copies of their *Bored of Education* 7" because they were on the counter in a box that said, "Free, take one" so I was just throwing them in with trades and I only kept one copy for myself…
P: That's too bad.

MLC: …because at that time it was like, OK, it's seventies punk, and people didn't really care at the time when I was trading records in the mid-to-late eighties, and I got it for free so you just give it away for free.
P: Who knew that that was going to be a sixty or eighty or even a hundred dollar record?

MLC: And I was just that little bit further removed. I never had any aspirations to run a record store and I wasn't even really a collector. Like when I first heard stories of people even paying a hundred dollars for the Negative Approach 7" I thought it was insane. And in a lot of respects it kind of is. [laughter]
P: Yeah, these kids now, they have no idea that you used to find those singles… I know somebody that in the mid or late eighties or whatever bought the Negative Approach single in Portland for like three dollars.

MLC: Wow. Because not long after somebody had bought the Negative Approach 7" in Toronto and news of this purchase price of $100 had sort of rippled through the scene and it seemed like such an obscene amount of money. That would have been about '92 or '93, and the price just seemed absurd. So you finally opened your own shop in '92 in Portland. So was this Singles Going Steady already or what was the name?
P: No, no. It was called Roundhouse Records.

MLC: Was this after the club in England?
P: The club in England, exactly.

MLC: Can you tell us a little about that and your transition then from your West Coast stores.
P: Well, it was a small space. It was wicked, I loved it. It was amazing; I had started my dream. It was what I had been building towards since I worked at that first store. But it was weird because I went through and I pulled out probably sixty or seventy percent of my collection to start and then I got a loan for ten thousand dollars and I spent seven of it on the usual stuff, like Black Flag *Damaged*, like all the SST catalogue, like Adolescents, Circle Jerks, all the Frontier stuff—standards a punk store should have. I was sitting there and I was looking at my bin of LPs and it was one row. I was like, "I can't believe that's my new stock." What helped me out at that point in time was, again, my brother Chris, because he had since moved down to the States and also moved to Portland in the late eighties. He worked at a store that's still in Portland called Second Avenue Records and it opened up in '81. Chris helped me out with distributors because I just had no idea. This was pre-internet, right? I had no idea how to get in touch…

MLC: Phone calls and faxes.
P: Yes, and even shit like they would mail the weekly updates. You got them via the mail and then you called your order in and did it over the phone. And when I first did it, I didn't have a fax machine so you would call the orders in and talk. And I used to order from SST direct and what was kind of cool was the sales rep…

MLC: Dukowski!
P: …was Chuck. Oh, Chucky, what a fucking loon job, but it

(Wherein I tell the tale of how I managed to give away four copies of the Fits 7" for free…)

was pretty cool to talk to him on the phone you know? And Revolver was a cool distributor back then and I used to use them. Chris sort of helped me out getting the distributors that I needed. I'd go into there and ask him, "OK Chris, where do you get this from? Where do you get this from?" Of course I had to be careful because the owners of Second Avenue were a little mental. When I first opened up, Chris actually thought that his job might be in jeopardy because his brother was opening up a record store.

MLC: And these attitudes can still exist because it can be very territorial.

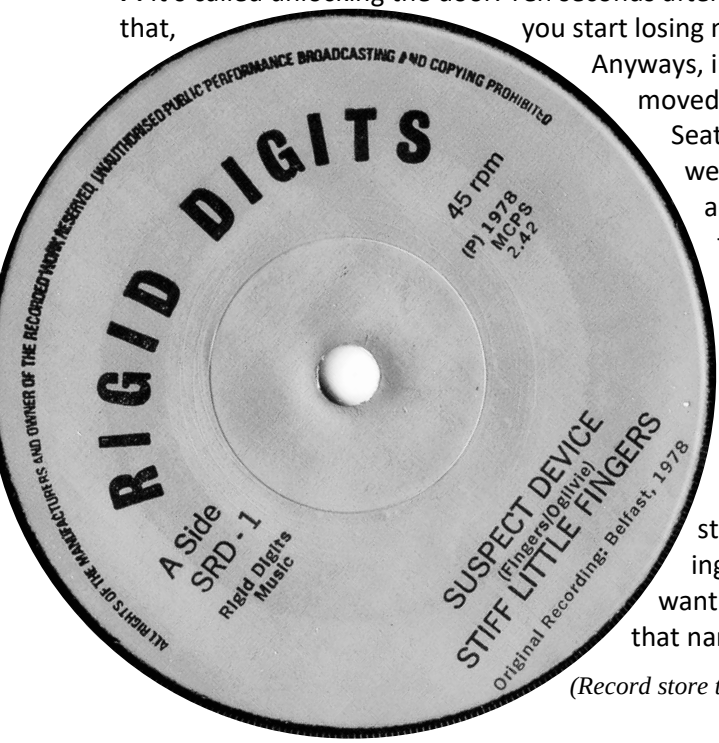
P: Yeah, yeah. So Chris helped me out with the distributors. And that was back when SST records were five dollars wholesale and the singles were two dollars wholesale. And still at those prices I was like, I've got not even a full row of singles here, not even a bin and a half of LPs, and maybe twenty or thirty CDs and cassettes too. I'm sitting there the day before I opened thinking, "This is seven thousand dollars' worth of shit? This is crazy! I can't believe it's so little." So I had Roundhouse until '96. I had lived in Portland for thirteen years at that point and I wanted a change. I didn't know too much about Seattle; I had gone up a few times over the years to do some record shopping and I thought they could use a good store up there. So I sold a little bit of stock to this guy in Portland and he took over Roundhouse. He was not a businessman, his girlfriend at the time had a lot of money and that's how he kept it going for like a year or a year and a half. Then his girlfriend left him, the money ran out, and he ended up closing it.

MLC: Hey, who knew how quickly you could lose money running a record store?

P: Yeah! Yeah! [laughter]

MLC: We'll get to that! [laughter]

P: It's called unlocking the door. Ten seconds after you do that, you start losing money. Anyways, in '96 I moved to Seattle. I went up and I found a spot and because Roundhouse was still going, I didn't want to use that name so before I left Portland in the early eighties there was a store in Portland called Singles Going Steady. The owner had it for about four to five years and it was a cool store, it was a punk store. We used to go in there (mimics jaw dropping), "My god, Stiff Little Fingers singles! This is amazing!" I'd spend as much money as I could up there and by the time I moved to Portland he closed maybe four months after I moved there. Anyway, I always thought that was a cool store and a cool fucking name for a store. He was the guy that ran that T/K (Tim/Kerr) Records, they put out some Poison Idea records like *Pajama Party*, sort of the later stuff. Anyways, I contacted him and I just went, "OK, Thor, your store has been closed for twelve years now. Would you be OK with me using Singles as a name of a store?" And he was like, "I'd be honored actually." Because the thing was the store in Seattle was on Second Avenue; part of me wanted to call it Second Avenue Records, but Chris still worked at Second Avenue when I moved up there. I thought, "Jesus, if they almost fired him when I opened up a little store not even close to them in Portland, what happens if they find out his brother moved to Seattle and opened Second Avenue Records?" So I didn't.



MLC: So the nineties, or the mid-nineties, this was the time when it was seen as one of the initial booms in punk saleability and marketability and you had labels like Lookout going from bedroom operations to multi-million dollar operations raking it in hand over fist. For someone running a shop at that point in that time was it actually lucrative in the nineties for you?

P: It wasn't bad, it wasn't bad. Portland, I had that shop for four and a half years I think, and the first half a year that I owned the shop I rented a house with my brother and his girlfriend at the time and then after about six months my money ran out. I wanted to put whatever I paid for rent, like four hundred dollars or five hundred dollars or whatever, I wanted to put it towards records for my store and use it for my shop so I basically moved in the back of the store for almost four years with just a sink and a toilet. There was a point in time after I moved into the back of the store that the store was doing pretty good, but not making any money obviously. Anything coming into the store, I was just putting back into building the stock. So after the first six months when I moved into the back of the store, I took a part-time job. My dad owned a dry cleaners when I was living in Portland and I would go there two times a week after they closed and I would clean the machines, sweep the floors, and take out garbage. I did that for about a year just to get some extra income and for about four months on top of that I got another part-time job via a temp agency. This was working at UPS prior to the holidays and through the holidays. So between the store—at which I worked seven days a week—I worked two to three days at the drycleaners, and I worked thirty-five hours at UPS. It was crazy. I was working something like 120 hours a week.

(Record store trends that kill me in 2017—pricing things at or above max Discogs asking prices.)

MLC: At that point in time, you were a lot younger then and you could sustain things like that over a longer period, but did you not tell yourself, "This is insane. Why am I running a business full-time, and still need two other sources of income?" Was that realization settling in at all?

P: No, no, not at all. It was all to keep the store going, it was all to build that store up, it was to continue to keep stock and get the new releases because the shit was coming out like crazy. After about four months I did get burned out on it and I left the UPS thing. I did the dry cleaning thing for almost two years because that was casual; I didn't even really have set days that I had to go in. My folks owned it so they paid me under the table, so that was nice as everything I did was going back into that store.

MLC: So Singles Going Steady was your last shop there on the West Coast. So what precipitated you making the decision to go from the West Coast back here to Ontario?

P: I had been in Seattle for ten years, I had had Singles for ten years, and again I got that itch to move somewhere. I had a great time in Seattle, but I just wanted a change in life again. I would come back here every couple of years to visit family and I would go to the record stores and I thought, "Yeah, I think a store like mine would do good in Toronto..." No.

MLC: And I have to note that this is the first point in the interview where Pete has stopped smiling. [laughter]

P: Yes, exactly. I basically sold the name, I got a little bit for the name, and I sold enough stock to get the guy started to take over Singles. Basically it was enough money to get me moved here, because it was not cheap to move a record store's worth of stuff along with your personal stuff three thousand miles back to a different country. Basically it got me enough money to do that, I was able to pay first and last month's rent, and I could buy a little bit of stock to replenish because I sold him all the staples. You know, Damned records, and Circle Jerks, and Hüsker Dü records—stuff a punk store should have. Pretty much I had enough money to move here, get opened up, and had a tiny bit of money for replenishment of stock and then boom, that money was all gone.

MLC: At various points you said a punk record store, or a punk shop; did you at any point think about expanding the parameters of the shop? When people think Seattle in the nineties of course they think of grunge and that sort of stuff. Did that ever hold any appeal to you and what did you think about that whole phenomenon?

P: I mean I carried that stuff, much to my chagrin. I actually thought the first couple of Nirvana records were great and the first couple of Mudhoney records were great, but as far as any of those other things, I wasn't really into, but I carried that stuff because it sold.

MLC: That's something else again where I don't think anybody could have foreseen how that was going to catch on. I remember being on tour in England in 1991 and we played somewhere in September or October—this was before the "Teen Spirit" video really landed—and I remember thinking that it was so weird to hear Nirvana being played in public rather than something you'd just hear in your room. A few months later I saw the video and it all changed. Even the year before we were touring and I asked the person who booked our tour in the UK in 1990, "Who is the next band you're bringing over?" When she told me Green Day, I started laughing and said, "Who the fuck likes Green Day?" And we got into this thing where she said, "No, you know what? I think they're going to get really big!" I thought, "No way!" I'd heard the first record and it was just too syrupy and saccharine. I can appreciate it more now I guess, but at the time I thought there was no way that shit was ever going to fly. Then three years later they were massive!

P: Lord knows how many copies of *Dookie* I sold when I was in Portland. I was able to get the vinyl too, so I sold tons of vinyl, sold tons of CDs, sold tons of cassettes of that record. Another one was Rage Against the Machine. That never really came out on vinyl, so I sold so many CDs and cassettes of that stuff. It was insane.

MLC: Around the time of that initial move there were things happening here at the time like Fucked Up with the Halloween Fest and Career Suicide was happening, so you must have been optimistic about Toronto at that point.

P: It's weird because those bands came through the Seattle store and I would talk to them, like, "How do you think this store would do in Toronto?" They were like, "This store would be amazing in Toronto!" So that sort of got me thinking…

MLC: Well, yeah, that this might actually be viable.

P: I thought, "I'll move back here! I'm from here!" I thought it would be all right.

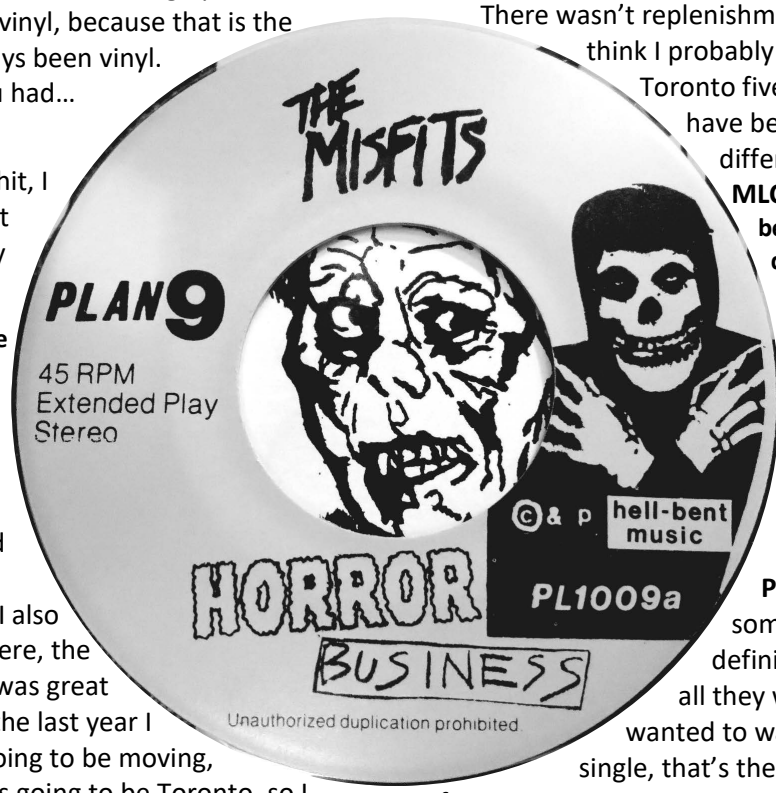
MLC: Was there anything you were doing differently when you brought the shop back to Toronto? You talked before about trying to keep all the punk staples in stock, did you have a different vision for things here in Toronto?

(When I suggested a local record store—pardon me— an exquisitely curated record shoppe (!!!) was insane asking $500 for a God Speed You! Black Emperor record I was told people should expect to pay a premium if they find something in a store as opposed to online. Crate digging goes boutique!)

P: No, nope, just continue on.

MLC: Well, by that stage you'd been operating record stores for a number of years so at what point do you think that game plan became no longer viable? Do you chalk that up to Toronto or shifting tides in the marketplace in terms of what's actually possible with a record store these days?
P: Ahhhh. (Long pause) That's a tough one.

MLC: Do you think the story would be different had you stayed in Seattle or would you have found yourself with similar challenging predicaments five years down the road in Seattle?
P: I think if I would have stayed in Seattle the store would actually still be going and I'd probably still be doing it. But talking with the guy who took over Singles, his volume of sales has gone down. As we were saying, I think the late nineties when I was in Seattle was the high point. I've always been heavy on the vinyl, because that is the medium for punk, it's always been vinyl. But in the late nineties you had…



MLC: Multiple formats...
P: Yeah, people like, "Oh shit, I got that on vinyl but I don't have it on CD" so now they were buying the CDs.

MLC: First they're buying the cassette for their cars and then buying CDs when they get a new car.
P: I think the start of the 2000s was a bit of the demise of doing the record store, because I definitely noticed sales going down. I also think that when I moved here, the store when it first started was great because I knew for about the last year I was in Seattle that I was going to be moving, and I was pretty sure it was going to be Toronto, so I started stockpiling some singles and LPs. When somebody would bring in fifty records to sell to the store, I would take two out of there that were really cool and I'd set them aside and they were going to be there when I first opened up the store in Toronto. When I first opened in Toronto, there were some amazing records on the wall.

MLC: And I just missed that opening, I came back to Canada from Japan a couple of months after the opening. Now, I can't complain—I still found a lot of good stuff.
P: Yeah, there were probably some great records that were still there. But the first weekend that it opened it was insane, there were so many good records there. I think the answer to the Toronto thing was… It's weird here, a lot of the people who bought records got to a point where they stopped buying records. They were more concerned about buying a house or getting a condo and moving on in their lives and records weren't in the scenario anymore. When I lives and records weren't in the scenario anymore. When I was on Bloor Street for three years, all these people who used to shop in the store started dropping off and they stopped buying records.

MLC: This is one of the perennial issues with punk rock, when do the new faces come in and who replenishes the old and what does that look like? I don't doubt that there was maybe a bit of a lull here in Toronto in terms of interest in punk rock and records before things could pick up again.
P: And I think a lot of stuff I got in Toronto would be guys coming into the store and just going, "Wow, it's too bad this store wasn't here ten years ago, I would have blown my entire paycheck here." They don't come in to buy records, they just come in to see the punk rock store. There wasn't replenishment of the scene here, and I do think I probably should have moved back to Toronto five years earlier. I think it would have been a different story and a different scenario.

MLC: When I think about Toronto being able to sustain a punk-dedicated venue or even a punk-dedicated record store, Toronto doesn't have a very good track record. So, you arrived here when some people were at a point in their lives where they were no longer putting their disposable income towards punk rock and it was going towards investing in…
P: Their futures, yeah. And some of my original clientele definitely got to the point where all they wanted was the hitters. They wanted to walk in and find a $200 Misfits single, that's the only thing they were looking for.

MLC: They weren't buying anything new and they already had all the staples.
P: Yeah, or they just weren't concerned with reissues. So I think some of the clientele went down because of that. I just think some people's values changed.

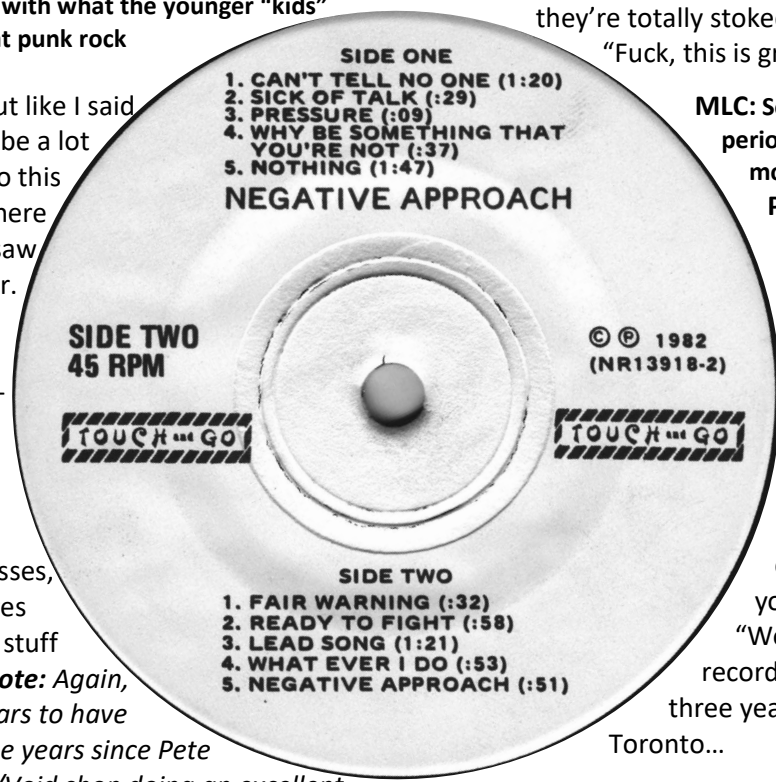
MLC: Now is there anything in retrospect that you feel you could have or should have done differently to appeal to these shifting interests? To get something for the person who has everything already, how hard do you think it would have been for a shop to get people coming in and divert some of their traffic away from Discogs and Ebay?
P: I don't know what the answer would have been and how I could have changed. I mean, I wouldn't carry like the flavor of the month shit because I don't know that stuff and I don't care about that stuff and it's not how I always

(But hey, that Godspeed record probably sold so who's the idiot? And would I pay that for a United Blood or Brick Wall 7"? Probably!)

ran my record stores. I've always carried what I sort of believed in and to me it seems like that's just harder and harder to have a retail shop these days and carry that kind of stuff. *(**MLC note:** This was one criticism that was occasionally leveled at Pete's store in Toronto. Some people would ask about stocking certain titles and sensed a reluctance on Pete's part to track things down that he was less familiar with or that weren't readily available through his regular distributors.)*

MLC: One thing with punk rock is that it's traditionally been identified as a youth subculture, so at some point the thing I'm sure everybody grapples with—and I guess I grapple with to a certain extent—is when do we reach our best before date where our definition and what something means to us no longer holds any currency? I mean, I'm forty-five so I'm still younger, and I never, never, refer to myself as "old" because I see people who are twenty-five talking about how old they are and I just think, "Get over it! There's still more to do and enjoy. Trust me, you haven't seen it all yet." But at what point do you think we naturally lose touch with what the younger "kids" are into? Do you ever feel that punk rock generation gap?

P: I mean, yeah, for sure. But like I said there just doesn't seem to be a lot of younger kids that are into this stuff. I sort of noticed that here in Toronto, and I definitely saw it when I went to Vancouver. I mean most of the people in Vancouver that shopped in the store were like thirty-five and up, and they were older guys. Those guys would come in and buy like Rixe and stuff like that and newer stuff and even represses, because there were no stores there that would carry that stuff for years and years. *(**MLC note:** Again, this is something that appears to have changed for the better in the years since Pete left Toronto, with the Faith/Void shop doing an excellent job of getting subsequent generations of people through the doors.)*



MLC: I haven't been to Vancouver since 2008, but even at the time it struck me as a crowded marketplace. There weren't any punk-dedicated shops, but there were quite a few shops where you could find a little bit of everything everywhere. When you initially mentioned moving to Vancouver, I immediately thought about the rents out there and I was trying to be very optimistic for you and hope it worked out considering how many years you had under your belt in this business.

P: It was weird because the one thing that we didn't talk about earlier was when I had Singles in Seattle for ten years, from '97 to 2000, I actually had a little satellite store in Vancouver. It was a small store and it did OK. The reason I opened it was because I was a dual citizen so I would have no problem going through the border and it's only a three hour drive. I would still get my stuff sent to Seattle and then I started ordering extra stuff and bringing it up to Vancouver, because a lot of people in Vancouver where coming down to Singles in Seattle when they'd come down for a show. They always popped in so that's what gave me the idea to do the little store up there. This was the late nineties so you could still find a small space for cheap rent and that was actually also the time when the Canadian dollar was sixty-five, sixty-eight cents on the US dollar. That store did pretty good. It was kind of funny when I moved back to Vancouver and opened up the shop, in the first two months I was open, I probably had twenty to twenty-five people come in Hits and Misses in Vancouver who used to shop at the little store in Main Street in Vancouver. Here it is fifteen years later and they're still excited about buying records and they're totally stoked to see me there. I was like, "Fuck, this is great! This is gonna go good!"

MLC: So there was a honeymoon period there of how long? A few months?

P: The first couple of months the store was open. I opened up and July and August were awesome, just so promising. I did the same thing that I did before I moved from Portland to Seattle. I knew I was going to be moving—I stashed collectable records so when you first walked in you'd go, "Wow, look at these really cool records in here." There was a three year period from when I closed Toronto…

MLC: Well, you were basically trying to clear up any debts and also get a bit of nest egg for the new store?

P: Yep, that's exactly what I did.

MLC: So what do you think brought that honeymoon to an end after that initial burst where people were coming in and buying stuff? Do you think it's a matter of people taking record shops for granted or it is just a function of the cost of Vancouver?

P: I don't really understand what happened. Like I said, the first two months were, "Wow!" There were all these old customers of mine and I'm going to get these new people into the shop, and I was like, "This is going to go great!" You never think that you're going to make any money owning a record store. Doing well in a record store means keeping up on the bills. That's it, that's all you can ask for.

(Ah NA, dangerous underground hate-filled anthems in '82 = today's feel good singalongs that get the whole room smiling. Me = not complaining!)

MLC: And the irony being that for any casual music fans, there is all this hyperbole about the vinyl renaissance, but when you think about how much wholesale records cost these days…

P: They are insane!

MLC: …very little of that's going to the shops.

P: I couldn't believe that in the three years of me having a store and then getting back into ordering stuff how much records have gone up wholesale. It's just insane. Like I wouldn't even stock records on certain labels in my store in Vancouver because of the cost. And I'm taking about staples like all the Black Flag records. In the three years that I was closed, SST doubled their wholesale price. I even got in touch with them to order direct, and even direct, "You have doubled your wholesale price in three years."

MLC: And Greg Ginn just says, "Lawsuits ain't cheap, baby."

P: Well, there's also that Drastic Plastic label that has reissued some really cool things, but their prices are insane. They're more than if an original walked through the door, and I think part of the problem for the record prices going up has been this resurgence of vinyl and the major labels repressing all these unneeded records.

MLC: Kenny Rogers *The Gambler* for Record Store Day.

P: Exactly, exactly. Fleetwood Mac *Rumors*. You know, that record shouldn't exist to begin with, but…

MLC: Now that Schlong 7" on the other hand, *Tumors*…

P: Yes, *Tumors*, that should exist. But that's what I think has made the record pressing plants raise their prices so the independents have to wait longer to get their stuff pressed and pay more. So that has raised the wholesale price.

MLC: When we were talking earlier about being younger and you'd go and blow your paycheck at the record store, it used to be that you could do that biweekly and you could come home with a handful of separate releases. But now if people are doing that and buying new releases, in many cases they're probably limited to one or two items, and that doesn't really do much to sustain record shops. To think that very often I used to baulk at paying a lot for records, I guess I'm in a different situation in my life now, but at a certain point I would have thought, "Forty dollars for a used record?" You know, I still have price tags on things like Amebix *Arise* that I bought for $4.00 or Toxic Reasons *Independence* for $3.50, but now I think finding anything comparable might cost $30 or $40, and sometimes you think you might as well pay that if reissues are costing $28 or $30 anyways. So in some respects $40 for a used record doesn't seem all that outrageous anymore. So despite there being this initial period of interest in the shop, at what point was the writing on the wall where you thought this is not something you can continue to pursue?

P: I opened up in July and by the beginning of February and March I knew. The first two months were very promising, then in September things nosedived. From averaging about $300 to $400 a day during those first couple of months, and that's having Saturday as the big day. It went from that down to averaging about $100 a day. And just the rent on that place, it wasn't crazy expensive, because I found something I was comfortable with when signing the lease, the rent was just under $2,500 a month. So that works out to $84 a day, but when you're averaging $100 a day for three months straight?

MLC: You're barely keeping the lights on, never mind eating.

P: Yeah, so I mean thank god I had that job that I have now because that basically paid all of the bills for the next year. We had like an OK Christmas, an OK Boxing Week, and then oddly enough January wasn't too bad, and then February went back to the nose dive. February, March, April, again averaging a little over $100 a day. I was like, this is enough to pay the rent but not even enough to pay the bills.

MLC: So you came to the conclusion that Vancouver wasn't going to work, and I read about other stores closing down around the same time in Vancouver. Despite people's almost romantic notions of what it's like to run a record shop, it pains me to ask this, but would you ever do it again or do you think it would be in any way viable to run the type of shop that you envision?

P: The only time I would do a store again, I would have to come into a ton of money. I'd have to have a ton of money and be prepared to lose it, because when I was here in Toronto I don't even want to say how much money I lost when I was here. But here I didn't have that option of having my job in Alberta that I could take money from.

MLC: So were you still flying back and working? I wasn't aware of that.

P: Yes. So, from Toronto I moved to Edmonton, and I started working up in the oil sands and you make very good money up there. So I would go up there and work ten days, I would come home; it's about an hour flight up from Edmonton up in the middle of nowhere. I would come back

(OK, which former roommate has my Schlong 'Brewery Tour' mug from when they played a Toronto warehouse circa 1992?)

and have half a day off, fly out to Vancouver, work in the store for eight days, come back to Edmonton, have a day off, and then fly up and work for ten days. I did that for almost a year and a half and I was just like, "This is not cutting it." Because in Toronto I didn't have that money option, so my money option was selling records out of my collection. I mean there's a hundred singles that I will never ever, ever in my life get back again, because I'm not going to pay two, three, four, five hundred dollars for them now. That's how I survived in Toronto, selling out of my personal collection. Then Vancouver was sort of the same thing, I was losing about the same amount except I had money because I'd paid off my debts that I'd left Toronto with and did collect a little nest egg to open up the shop. That went away quickly and then all of my paychecks just went towards the store. I went, "You know what? This is taking up all of my money and I have no time and I'm just too old for this." I'm fifty-one. You know, I'm never going to stop listening to punk rock.

MLC: So the dream of running a shop has finished, but has the collector in you subsided or are there still things you'd like to find?

P: Oh no, I was mentioning to somebody that when I closed Vancouver, my record collection, what was left of it after Toronto pillaged it… When I went to Edmonton, I knew I was going to open the shop in Vancouver so in the two and half years I was in Edmonton before I opened up the shop, I didn't even set up my stereo in my place so I never even looked through my records. When I moved everything to open up the shop, I peeked through my collection a little bit, but I hadn't really looked through my collection in probably five years. So when I moved back to Edmonton after closing the shop, I brought one LP bin and one 45 bin. I'm going to put my collection in the garage so it's easy to go through and flip through face up. So anyway, I was putting away a lot of stuff and I noticed, "Huh, there's a lot of stuff I'm missing. I don't have *Machine Gun Etiquette* by the Damned. I don't have a copy of *Fresh Fruit*."

MLC: I am appalled!

P: I am a poser. [laughter] I mean I used to, but I fucking sold them at some point in time. But these are things that I'm going to have to… I mean I went to a record fair today and I bought like ten records. I bought both of the Lords of the New Church records because I don't have them anymore. Who else is going to be dumb enough to buy those records? I don't even know why I bought it, but it was like five bucks. Yeah, I'm not going to stop buying records. It would be so hard for me to stop buying records.

MLC: I'm glad that my wife isn't here right now to hear me say this, but I've often wondered if I am going to have some sort of cut-off date. I've wondered if I'll stop buying new stuff when I hit fifty? At some point I'll have to pare things down. But I'm glad that these experiences haven't killed your enthusiasm for music and records.

P: I think right now though, I'm definitely not going to stop buying records, but I think I'm only going to buy second hand stuff that I need to replenish in my collection. Like I said, I was floored that I don't have *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, and the thing that really sucks is that Eric Smith, the first drummer from Career Suicide, brought one into the Vancouver shop when he worked there. I sort of felt bad about that because he was the only guy who worked there where that was his only job. The other people just worked there one day a week, but Eric worked there three or four days a week while I was gone in Alberta working. About every three months or something like that, he would bring in a stack of records, because he has a couple of kids and he'd go, "Ah, hockey tuition." Between him and his wife…

MLC: My kids? No fucking sports!

P: What I told them? "You need to get your kids into soccer! It's just a field and a ball."

MLC: "Go to your room, make a fucking fanzine and don't come out until you're done!" ***(MLC Note:*** *Bear in mind I made these comments months before I found out my wife was pregnant.)*

P: He sold me, as his described it, a 'museum copy' of *Fresh Fruit*. But like he said, it was in museum condition, and what the fuck did I do? I sold it for $30 in my store. I was kicking myself, I should have kept that pristine copy.

MLC: So if someone were to embark upon doing a record store in this day and age in a city like Toronto, what advice would you give them?

P: Um, invest in whatever liquor company you like best because you're going to be drinking a lot of it!

(Boomtown Rats? Laugh it up but things like Star Wars and Planet of the Apes records aside, this is first "real" record I ever bought.)

Film Review:

She Said Boom: The Story of Fifth Column

Directed by Kevin Hegge, 2012

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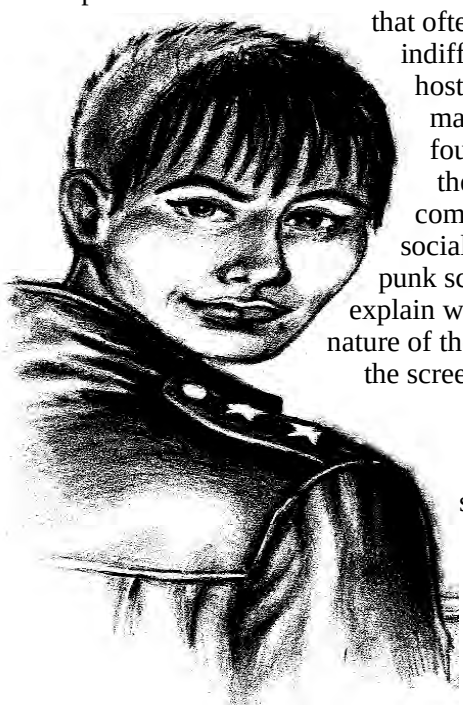
Recognition of Toronto's role as one breeding ground for the North American queercore scene has been growing in recent years thanks in no small part to the efforts of Canpunk historians like Sam Sutherland, Don Pyle, and Sarah Liss. Yet as someone who grew up in and around the Toronto scene, it always struck me as curious to hear rumblings about the city's homocore scene in zines like *MRR* and *Factsheet Five*. In spite of playing in bands, buying zines, going to and promoting shows, the Toronto homocore punk community I saw referenced in foreign zines rarely translated to physical evidence on the ground. True, this subsection of the scene wasn't one that I was actively searching out (my musical tastes tended to fall on the short, fast, loud, and generic side of the spectrum—never mind that for a lot of us true dorks at the time, punk provided a great refuge if you were too scared to talk about girls, boys, or anything even remotely sexual), but the queercore scene nonetheless maintained a clandestine air even to someone directly involved with other facets of the DIY punk scene in the city. All of this is to say that Kevin Hegge's 2012 documentary *She Said Boom: The Story of Fifth Column* came as even more of a revelation in providing me with such a late introduction to the band. (Full disclosure: G.B. Jones from the band was kind enough to run a workshop I helped set up in the mid-nineties geared towards teaching women how to do live sound, but I never got off my ass to track down their music back then.)

One of the ways that Hegge's documentary works so well is that the first third of the film is devoted to a basic formation story interspersed with a wealth of archival clips of the band's music, photography, and DIY Super 8 filmmaking. As a result, novices like me gain a decent appreciation of what the band was about before being asked to consider the group's influence and place in the wider context of North American punk. While the present-day interviews with various band members don't shy away from the interpersonal conflicts that peppered their existence, the larger story here is of a group of intensely creative women determined to carve out cultural space for themselves within a wider society and punk scene that often treated them with indifference if not outright hostility. As the documentary makes clear, the band often found greater affinity within the local experimental film community than the more socially and sexually conservative punk scene, which perhaps helps explain why the free-form ethereal nature of the music translates so well to the screen.



Despite the ambivalence the band often encountered within the wider punk scene, the DIY 'no experience necessary' ethos that punk helped foster undeniably played a large part in the band's formation and approach to their various artistic endeavors—think punk in execution rather than strict adherence to a musical genre. It's clear when watching interviews with the various band members that while they were not as sonically abrasive as their HC contemporaries, Fifth Column was certainly less conservative and more of a culturally challenging proposition than much of what the punk scene had to offer at the time. Footage of Bruce La Bruce accompanying the band on stage as a go-go dancer not only serves notice that traditional rock and social conventions were being upended, it also illustrates that simply having FUN(!!!) formed a big part of the band's mandate. Notwithstanding the "fanzine wars" that erupted as relationships between the band and La Bruce fractured, the band was also noteworthy for the allies they managed to find in a local gay community when many opted to self-segregate along gender lines. Though the documentary gives the impression that the band's lyrics were not always explicitly political—hell, the fact that Fifth Column even *existed* in early '80s Toronto was a statement in itself—they deserve immeasurable props for addressing issues like police harassment of the gay men when few other Toronto bands were doing so (see "The Fairview Mall Story" referencing police entrapping men looking to hook up at a small-town mall and then publicizing their names, ultimately resulting in lost jobs and the suicide of one husband/father).

Anti-Scrunti-Faction (A.S.F.)

http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_wevOqkpPeSU/Sa2ATfA tuOI/AAAAAAAAABRY/Bfg20eYAnr8/s400/sign.jpg

Perhaps all too predictably, the rebelliousness that Fifth Column engendered was generally deemed too challenging by much of the city's queer and punk communities. During a gig by Colorado's Anti-Scrunti Faction (A.S.F.) at the Quoc Te Club in Toronto's Kensington Market, many in attendance didn't hide their displeasure when G.B. Jones and Bruce La Bruce took the opportunity to screen some queer-positive

(Speaking of A.S.F., there is a pretty great documentary on Leslie Mah's post-A.S.F. band Tribe 8. ***Rise Above: The Tribe 8 Documentary*** *from 2004 is well worth seeking out.)*

Super 8 shorts. As La Bruce notes at one point in an interview, "That was sort of our dilemma, we were caught between these two subcultures, punk and gay, and we were kind of rejected by both of them." Regarding the local gay community, there is no ambiguity when watching interviews with founding member G.B. Jones that the assimilation and acceptance that many in the gay community desired was the last thing on her mind. If anything, being queer for Fifth Column implied an explicitly political and oppositional stance rather than any desire for acceptance by the status quo, not to mention exposing some of the conservative impulses that can exist in the supposedly more radical landscapes of the gay and punk communities.

At the midway point the documentary begins to explore how all of the music, art, writing, and film connected to Fifth Column members helped spread the word beyond the confines of 'Toronto the Good.' G.B. Jones' *Homocore* compilation tapes and zine of the same name, as well as zines like *J.D.s* and *Hide*, made Toronto appear like a hotbed of queercore activism to any outsiders paying attention. G.B. Jones points out that cut-and-paste fanzines served as ideal corrupting agents allowing the band to find allies and influence similar efforts in other cities despite finding little or no support from the mainstream media in the pre-internet era. As Kathleen Hanna acknowledges, the example set by the Toronto queerpunk community served as a template for the Riot Grrrl movement that followed years later. Indeed, Hanna ventures to admit that as challenging as Riot Grrrl might have been for the mainstream media, her band remained far more palatable and received far more attention in no small part due to assumptions that Bikini Kill members were straight and Fifth Column were all queer (referring to themselves as "Bull dykes from Transylvania" in one MuchMusic interview clip probably didn't help, the TV station eventually blacklisted the band when Fifth Column—in a classic "We-forbid-you-to-do-this" move—began a live broadcast by performing their track *All Women Are Bitches*). Regarding Fifth Column's wider influence, the only shortcoming I felt the film had (well, aside from length—62 minutes? I'd love to see a DVD emerge with extras) was the limited range of outside players interviewed. Great as it was too hear Kathleen Hanna discuss the debt Riot Grrrl owed to Fifth Column and Toronto queercore, it would have been fantastic to also see the inclusion of peers like Donna (Team) Dresch and Leslie Mah (A.S.F., Tribe 8) who arguably had stronger connections to the band. (Just so it doesn't seem like I am being too particular, let me say a big "YES!" to the inclusion of Fifth Column collaborator and agent provocateur Vaginal Davis.)

Photo by **Edie Steiner**, 1983 (**http://ediesteiner.com/**)
http://milenoodoom.com/frenewsite/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/5th-Column-by-edie-1983.jpg

http://queermusicheritage.com/JUL2009/jones-GB%20interview/Fifth%20Column%20with%20Bruce%20LaBrucesm.jpg

OK, I'm not going to lie and say that *She Said Boom* will have me reaching for a Fifth Column record over an *(insert-random-Discharge-worshipping-obscurity-here)* LP most days of the week. Nevertheless, Fifth Column's approach to punk and the rebel life is something I find far more compelling than any number of Madball-worshipping acts composed of 15-year-old-varsity-boys-with-chips-on-their-shoulders. Furthermore, as someone with an obvious interest in punk's development over the years, it's great to see the queercore part of the Riot Grrrl's pre-history get some much-deserved recognition. Even considering the heteronormative standards and machismo that became more firmly embedded once hardcore eclipsed the initial waves of punk, it is important to remember that punk started out as a place for self-proclaimed freaks and weirdoes. Seeing the members of Fifth Column use the band as a multidisciplinary vehicle to carve out space separate from the wider sub/culture—all the while employing subversion and sabotage to defy straight/queer/punk conventions—definitely makes for fun viewing. Even better, this film serves not so much as a eulogy to some romanticized vision of punk past (there's no "It's over, you missed it" sentiment here) but left me feeling energized and inspired about the possibilities that the art-meets-punk-meets-politics DIY mix might continue to offer. There are any number of punk documentaries out there these days retreading much of the same terrain; much respect to Hegge for investigating an under-documented part of Toronto punk history and creating a film that genuinely comes from a place of love and inspiration rather than tired nostalgia.

http://toronto.mediacoop.ca/sites/mediacoop.ca/files2/mc/imagecache/page450/final_poster.jpg
All Fifth Column images pilfered from various online sources.
No offense intended to any artists for uncredited work here.

(Clearly I know nothing about capital "F" film so no bumbling attempt to talk of technique or cuts or whatever. Shit looked good though!)

Midlife Crisis Era HC

Me:
46, college teacher, husband (ten years), father (ten weeks!!!!), surprised, very, retire, never

Punk:
still the shit, 30+ years of shows, not jaded just more selective, punk circa 2017 = some of the best punk, better yet to come, old curmudgeons = no clue, they (me? I?) need to stop complaining, dive in or get out of the way

Midlife Crisis:
title, thought I was joking, nope, suddenly real, details next time, perhaps

Thanks:
OAF, NoMeansNo, & Pete Genest. Tim Freeborn (proofreading savior). Angela Owens, Ryan Rose, and Iztok Vidmar (photography). Kevin Hegge for sharing the Fifth Column doc and others who I've no doubt forgotten, friends

Apologies (BIG):
Haram (NYC) were very giving of their time when interviewed at NDY 2016, too much in here already, see you next time

Layout/Design: Microsoft Word, *all of it*, ha, so much work lost every step of the way

Token Gestures:
100% recycled paper, if you're paying for this you are contributing roughly fifty cents of cost to **RAVEN (https://raventrust.com/)** –please check it out. If I can pay for a printer and create more waste, then perhaps at least some of it can be put towards some more tangible good. Punk rock civic duty. Token gestures yes, but so much of punk often is.

Records:
need, want, love, GISM M.A.N., City Rockers comp, Lip Cream, Gauze, Death Side, Confuse, OG, step up, for trade, your list gets mine, records + coffee = unbeatable, record stores + Discogs top dollar pricing = sad

Contact:
midlifecrisiserahc@gmail.com

Daragh Hayes
250 Pall Mall Street, Unit 601
London, Ontario
Canada
N6A 6K3

Get in touch to buy, distro, or talk record trading

Next Issue:
Haram (NYC), Negazione (Italy) from 1988, fingers crossed Ryan from Faith/Void shop Toronto, more, maybe, NDY 2017 = on the prowl for next time

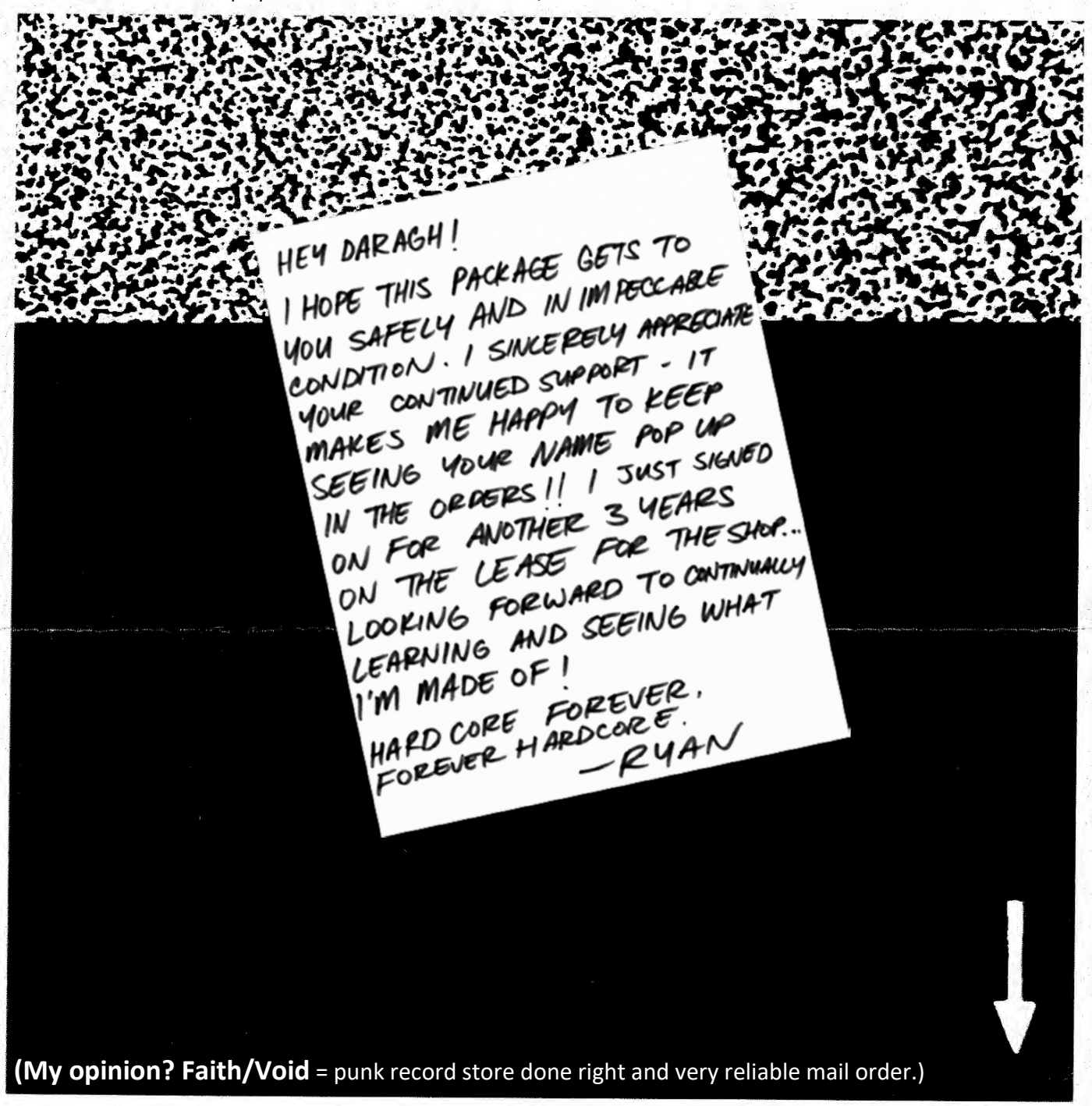
Up the midlife punks!

(**Haram** by Angela Owens, thanks!)

DIY - OUTSIDER - INDEPENDENT - UNDERGROUND - SUBVERSIVE MEDIA

RECORDS • CASSETTES • ZINES & COMICS • PRINTED MATTER • WEARABLES

Got this letter and shop flyer in a box of records from Faith/Void. Now scanned and defaced for a back cover here!


HEY DARAGH!
I HOPE THIS PACKAGE GETS TO YOU SAFELY AND IN IMPECCABLE CONDITION. I SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT - IT MAKES ME HAPPY TO KEEP SEEING YOUR NAME POP UP IN THE ORDERS!! I JUST SIGNED ON FOR ANOTHER 3 YEARS ON THE LEASE FOR THE SHOP... LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTINUALLY LEARNING AND SEEING WHAT I'M MADE OF!
HARD CORE FOREVER.
FOREVER HARDCORE.
-RYAN

(My opinion? Faith/Void = punk record store done right and very reliable mail order.)

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